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## NEWS RELEASE

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Ministry of Health

### **More youth will be supported with tools to prevent addiction, substance use**

COURTENAY – More young people will soon have better access to the tools they need to manage stress, build resilience and prevent early substance use and mental-health challenges with the expansion of drug- and substance-use prevention supports.

“We know young people today are under more pressure than ever, from social media to school stress, and they need support early on,” said Josie Osborne, Minister of Health. “By expanding the PreVenture program to more schools, we’re giving students tools to understand the risks of substance use, while building the confidence and skills they need to handle life’s challenges and stay healthy.”

The PreVenture program is an evidence-based program that helps students of 12-18 years develop skills to navigate common challenges, such as peer pressure, identity development and interpersonal conflict, all of which are key factors in helping to prevent early drug and substance use and mental-health challenges.

“It’s more important than ever to make sure young people have the support they need to live healthy, fulfilling lives, especially when things get tough,” said Lisa Beare, Minister of Education and Child Care. “Programs like PreVenture give youth the tools to manage stress, deal with peer pressure and look after their mental health. By providing these kinds of resources, we’re reinforcing our commitment to keeping kids safe and supported, so they can thrive both in and out of the classroom.”

Since launching in 2023 and as of this school year, the program has expanded to more than 80 schools in more than 20 school districts through partnerships with districts and regional health authorities. Any school districts or schools that are interested in implementing the PreVenture program are encouraged to connect with the Foundry team.

“Mental-health challenges have become increasingly complicated for young people today, and without support, they can have a lasting impact on their lives,” said Jodie Wickens, Minister of Children and Family Development. “PreVenture gives young people the ability to prevent crisis and gives them hope for a brighter future.”

Foundry provides schools with comprehensive support, including training for school staff, coaching and implementation resources to deliver the PreVenture program, at no direct cost to schools. The Ministry of Health is investing \$2 million in annual funding for the program.

Enhancing supports for people of all ages living with mental-health and addiction challenges is an integral part of government’s work to build a full continuum of mental-health and substance-use care that works for everyone.

**Quotes:****Steve Mathias, executive director, Foundry, Providence Health Care —**

“Foundry is committed to breaking down barriers to access mental-health and substance-use support so young people feel more comfortable reaching out for connection, support and life-saving services. This important investment will enable substance-use prevention initiatives like the PreVenture program to reach more young people earlier, before their concerns become challenges.”

**Michelle Waite, board chair, Comox Valley Schools —**

“The PreVenture program equips young people with practical strategies to understand themselves, manage stress and make healthy choices. We’re thankful for the partnerships that make it possible to bring prevention directly into our classrooms. Studies show that strong mental-health supports can positively impact the path of a young person’s life.”

**Dr. Patricia Conrod, developer, PreVenture program —**

“The personality-targeted approach to school-based drug prevention began with a small Canadian trial that included B.C. schools and youth participants. This early study and subsequent studies have demonstrated that this program reduces adolescent substance use and harms. It is wonderful to see this program has become so widely accessible to young people in the province, as it will likely have significant impact.”

**Quick Facts:**

- The PreVenture program is an evidence-based initiative developed in Canada and validated through funded research from the Canadian Institutes of Health Research.
- The PreVenture program has proven effective in delaying the initiation of substance use and reducing it by up to 80%, as well as reducing anxiety, depressive symptoms and suicidal ideation among youth.

**Learn More:**

To learn more about PreVenture, visit: <https://preventureprogram.com/>

To learn more about Foundry and the services offered, visit: <https://foundrybc.ca/>

To learn how B.C. is building better mental-health and addictions care, visit: <https://gov.bc.ca/BetterCare>

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