



PROFESSIONAL QUICK GUIDE

Parental Substance Use & Kinship Families

For schools, health services, social and community services, legal-system partners and other professionals supporting children and kinship caregivers in PEI.

Recognize the actual caregiver. Return adult responsibilities to adults. Use person-first language. Make referrals that connect.

1. Use factual, person-first language

- Prefer: parent with a substance use disorder, parent who uses substances, return to substance use, or the specific observed behaviour.
- Avoid labels such as addict, drunk, junkie, substance abuser, clean or dirty.

2. Ask what the child has been responsible for

- Monitoring the parent or checking whether they are safe.
- Caring for siblings.
- Managing emergencies or adult emotions.
- Keeping secrets or explaining the family situation to services.

3. Build relational safety

- Give reliable information about what happens next.
- Do not use the child as messenger.
- Plan contact around the child's safety and regulation.
- Preserve safe sibling, family and cultural relationships.



Practice actions

4. Do not make the caregiver coordinate every system

- Own the referral that belongs to your service.
- Use warm handoffs when possible.
- Ask only for the private family information you need.
- Give a named contact and realistic timeframe.

5. Know PEI family-support routes

- Youth and Family Addiction Services supports youth and families / caregivers.
- CRAFT supports families and concerned significant others.
- Friends Supporting Friends is a current seniors support and education group.
- Mental Health and Addictions Phone Line: 1-833-553-6983, 24/7.

6. Overdose planning is an adult responsibility

If opioid use is relevant, help adults access PEI naloxone information. Do not make a child responsible for monitoring the parent, deciding whether they are intoxicated or administering naloxone.

Evidence base

PEI: *Stepping Up and Stepping In*, UPEI / Building GRAND-Families. Canadian: CCSA stigma guidance and caregiver-support work.

Full professional guide: grandfamiliesinc.com/professionals-parental-substance-use-kinship.html