Safe Drug Use Policies Gain Traction on College Campuses

Students are being trained to use and distribute naloxone to their peers in several Canadian universities. Will schools in the U.S. follow?

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In response to the opioid crisis, several universities across Canada are starting to implement safe drug use policies across their campuses — doing things like stocking and distributing the opioid-reversing drug naloxone and prioritizing support, education, and prevention over existing zero-tolerance policies. Will colleges in the United States soon do the same? A recent report by University Affairs takes an in-depth look at the phenomenon.

According to the article, public health advocates in several schools, including MacEwan University, Thompson Rivers University and the University of British Columbia, have all begun to rethink their policies concerning illicit and illegal drugs after several opioid-related deaths. All are advocating for better education around harm reduction and drug policy reforms.

Some are hosting panel discussions and naloxone trainings. Others are implementing designated safe spaces for students to speak to counselors about drugs without fear of discipline or expulsion. At the University of British Columbia, the group Canadian Students for Sensible Drug Policy is advocating for the adoption of a “good Samaritan” policy that would allow students involved in drug-related emergencies to call for help without fear of consequences.

Some organizations, like MacEwan University’s Moms Stop the Harm, have been formed by concerned parents who have lost their children to drug-related deaths. Others, like Thompson Rivers University’s revamped wellness center, are part of a campus-wide effort to combat the crisis.

To read more about these initiatives, click here.

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