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A UNITED WAY OF CALGARY
AND AREA INITIATIVE



FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Providing answers to the most common questions
about Planet Youth.

Can't find your question? We're here to help. Please
reach out to us at planet.youth@calgaryunitedway.org.

What is Planet Youth?

Planet Youth is a community-focused youth initiative led by the United Way of Calgary and Area. Together with local partners and research-backed data, we support the well-being and resilience of young people within our city, helping them live their best life.

What kinds of events, activities, or opportunities does Planet Youth provide?

It depends! Every community has different needs, and we don't have a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, we listen to young people directly to determine what kind of supports or recreation they would like to see in their community, then work with partner organizations to implement solutions that respond to their needs.

Ultimately, we hope that Planet Youth Calgary's work in community leads to better life opportunities for all youth, including stronger senses of belonging, connection, mental health.

How can I get involved or stay informed?

There are many ways to be involved with Planet Youth Calgary. We welcome young people, families, caregivers and other community members to volunteer for events and activities. If you'd like to have a voice in decision making and implementation of our initiative, we also welcome you to join the Community Action Team.

If you're interested in learning more about getting involved, contact us at planet.youth@calgaryunitedway.org. If you would like updates on our progress, you can also sign up for our newsletter or follow us on Facebook or Instagram at [PlanetYouthCalgary](#).

What is the Community Action Team?

The Community Action Team is made up of local involved agencies, policy-makers, parents/caregivers and other community members committed to leading community-based initiatives. They meet regularly to brainstorm, plan, and implement initiatives that align with the Planet Youth model. If you would like to join or learn more, contact us at planet.youth@calgaryunitedway.org.

Who is involved in this work?

A number of organizations throughout the city are involved in our work, including United Way of Calgary and Area, the University of Calgary, Miskanawah, Trellis and YMCA Calgary. Playing an equally vital role in supporting the Planet Youth initiative are the many other participants we work with, including agencies, community members, parents/caregivers, and grass-roots community organizations.

Why aren't there Planet Youth initiatives in other communities?

We're just getting started! Currently, our goal is to focus our efforts and refine our approach before expanding to other communities. By year five, we plan to have shown the efficacy of the Planet Youth model and begin rolling it out to the rest of the city.

Do you cater to only specific status youth, such as Canadian or Permanent Residents, or are you doing anything to support diverse youth?

This is for **all** young people of Calgary. We firmly believe in tailoring the Planet Youth model to the diverse populations of Calgary. To do so, we collaborate with local organizations that serve specific cultural or demographic groups, helping us reach more youth and incorporate a diversity of perspectives.

There is enough evidence and research done already. Why do we need a survey?

Most youth studies are conducted provincially or nationally, but we need to learn from our city's youth directly on a local and community-based level. A core component of the Planet Youth model is listening to youth voices, helping them feel valued, heard, and respected as members of their community.

The Planet Youth survey is an important first step in hearing from youth, and using what we learn to guide our work in fostering community engagement among youth.

How will feedback from participants and parents be addressed?

All feedback will be added to the data set used by the Community Action Team to guide the Planet Youth initiative. Aggregated survey results will be shared with Community Action Teams, schools, and communities. These teams will use the data to identify the strengths and needs of youth in their communities, then develop action plans to reduce risk factors and support protective factors.

How were the four pilot communities selected?

We engaged PolicyWise for Families & Children to identify key pilot communities. Together, we selected four regions—Thorndcliffe/Huntington Hills, Saddle Ridge, Greater Forest Lawn and Shawnessy—based on youth demographic factors, existing community initiatives like All In for Youth and Community Hubs, and proximity to community partners and recreation centres like Trellis and the YMCA Calgary. Together, these four communities represent the diverse backgrounds and experiences of Calgary's youth.

What age range is Planet Youth Calgary most focused on?

While kids of all ages can find support through Planet Youth Calgary, we focus largely on youth aged 12–18. This age range tends to see a decline in engagement in the kind of high-quality leisure time activities that promote skill building and character development, making youth more vulnerable to risk factors that could lead to substance use.

Why are only Grade 10 students being surveyed?

A: While our focus is on youth ages 12–18, there are limitations with surveying all youth from this group. By targeting Grade 10 students, we gain valuable insights into the risk and protective factors at play. At the middle of this age range, their perspectives help us understand why young people disengage from community activities, guiding us on where to allocate resources. Grade 10 is also a pivotal transition year, as students begin moving from childhood to adulthood, making their input especially useful.



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What is the Indigenous Parallel?

Planet Youth Calgary's Indigenous Parallel focuses on centering the voices and experiences of Indigenous youth in our city. We are proud to be one of the first Planet Youth sites to implement a parallel approach for supporting Indigenous young people.

As part of this parallel initiative, Planet Youth Calgary works with Indigenous Elders, Knowledge Keepers, community members, and Indigenous young people themselves, to develop community supports that are informed by Indigenous voices and ways of doing.

Why is there an Indigenous Parallel?

Paralleling Indigenous and Western ways helps build understanding, trust and respect among our communities. Working with Indigenous young people and Elders, the Indigenous Parallel is grounded in Indigenous teachings, making relatives, creating ethical space, and showing kindness to all things.

One of the first initiatives of its kind, the Indigenous Parallel is an opportunity to put United Way's Akak'stiman Indigenous Strategy and Miskanawah's Wahkotowin Framework into practice. If you would like to learn more about these foundational Indigenous frameworks, you can visit calgaryunitedway.org/impact/indigenous-strategy or miskanawah.ca/teachings.

What does primary prevention mean?

Primary prevention focuses on the primary sources, or root causes, of substance misuse. It represents a holistic approach, focusing on the community as a whole to build support networks that foster youth resilience, mental health, and well-being.

We believe that by building a positive and supportive community environment, we can improve youth mental health and greatly diminish the use of tobacco, alcohol and drugs, reducing the long-term health consequences of substance use among youth.

Does Planet Youth offer counselling or mentorship services?

While we don't provide these services directly, many of the organizations we are partnered with do, such as Big Brothers Big Sisters and Recovery Alberta.

How will you assess the impact Planet Youth is having on the community?

We encourage feedback. In addition to the Grade 10 survey, we will obtain feedback from participants to support our assessment of Planet Youth's direct impact. The results from the survey itself will help inform future activity and demonstrate the initiative's value for the community.

How was Planet Youth funded?

We are very grateful to the United Way of Calgary and Area, who has been successful in raising funds to help support Planet Youth Calgary.

What is Planet Youth Calgary doing to help youth with mental health and substance use right now?

Planet Youth Calgary is an up-stream prevention initiative, meaning we start by addressing the root causes of substance use and mental health challenges in our communities. Instead of working retroactively to curb problematic behaviour, we take proactive measures by working to support stronger connections and belonging within communities.

The most important work is always long term. But we foresee a better tomorrow for Calgary's youth, with lower rates of substance use, stronger mental health, and higher indicators of overall well-being.



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