



Barbados Tackles Evolving Drug Challenges



Minister of Home Affairs and Information & NCSA Research & Information Officer Mrs. Laura Foster having a look at the report.

The release of the **2023 Barbados Drug Information Network (BARDIN) Report** findings has once again reaffirmed the importance of evidence-based strategies in addressing substance abuse challenges in Barbados.

BARDIN is part of the NCSA's robust calendar of activities for Drug Awareness Month 2025, held under the theme "NCSA: Strengthening Prevention."

Speaking at the presentation, Minister of Home Affairs and Information, Wilfred Abrahams underscored the critical role of research and collaboration in combating the scourge of drugs.

He highlighted the growing complexity of the drug landscape, stating, "This year's BARDIN points to the continued presence and use of synthetic substances, the misuse of prescription drugs, and the increasing potency of marijuana. These developments highlight the need for multipronged responses and united efforts to enable us to get a handle on the situation."

The Minister emphasized the necessity of adopting a public health approach which prioritizes treatment, harm reduction, and inter-agency collaboration over punitive measures and called for legislative reforms to address emerging substances and close legal loopholes, citing examples from other Caribbean jurisdictions. "By striking a balance between public health strategies and updated legal frameworks, we can create a comprehensive approach to effectively address the challenges posed by our ever-evolving drug landscape," Minister Abrahams added.

He lauded the NCSA for its dedication to producing timely and reliable data, noting that tools like BARDIN are essential for shaping policies and programs. He encouraged stakeholders to continue prioritizing research initiatives such as the Early Warning System and traditional surveys to better understand and respond to the drug crisis.

"When our decisions are grounded in solid evidence, we can confidently and consistently put our best foot forward," he said.

Main Takeaway From The Report

1. The 2023 drug landscape remained similar to that of previous years. Alcohol, marijuana and cocaine were the most prevalent substances on record. Males aged 40 and under were the demographic most likely to seek treatment or face legal consequences for drug related offences.
2. There has been an increase in female drug offenders and a concomitant decrease in females seeking treatment which together highlight the need for gender specific drug prevention interventions as well as programmes designed to meet the needs of incarcerated females and their children.
3. Other noteworthy developments included: the potential increase in the potency of locally available marijuana, the growing presence of emerging drugs.
4. High potency and emerging drugs pose a significant health risk underscoring the need for a robust national response which should be guided by a thorough understanding of the drugs involved.

NCSA Applauded For Its Commitment to Research



NCSA Chairman Mr. Hadford Howell

Chairman of The National Council on Substance Abuse Mr. Hadford Howell has lauded the organisation for its ongoing dedication to producing groundbreaking research, particularly through the annual Barbados Drug Information Network (BARDIN) Report.

Addressing the audience at the release of the 2023 findings, he described the report as a cornerstone in understanding the evolving drug landscape in Barbados.

“This comprehensive research allows us to track drug trends and provides the foundation for evidence-based responses at both policy and programmatic levels,” Howell stated. He emphasized that tools like BARDIN and initiatives such as the Early Warning System highlight the NCSA’s critical role in equipping Barbados with the knowledge to combat the complexities of substance use and abuse.

Chairman Howell further acknowledged the collaborative efforts of the NCSA with stakeholders like the Royal Barbados Police Force, the Government Forensic Science Centre, and healthcare providers. “The NCSA’s commitment to forging partnerships and gathering timely, reliable data ensures we remain vigilant and proactive in our fight against the scourge of drugs,” he remarked.

Through the release of the BARDIN 2023 Report, Chairman Howell underscored the importance of research in shaping effective prevention strategies and expressed confidence in the NCSA’s ability to continue leading in this vital area.

Strengthening The Response to Emerging Drug Threats

Barbados must urgently address legislative gaps in drug control to combat the rising challenges posed by synthetic substances such as methamphetamine, MDMA, and synthetic cannabinoids.

Mrs. Laura Foster, Research and Information Officer at the National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA), highlighted these concerns during the presentation of the 2023 Barbados Drug Information Network (BARDIN) Report at the NCSA headquarters.

She explained that while current laws under the Prevention and Control of Substance Abuse Act address traditional drugs like cannabis and cocaine, no provisions exist for newer synthetic drugs. This lack of regulation she says creates vulnerabilities in enforcement, making it difficult to prosecute offences such as trafficking and intent to supply.

She also drew attention to the increasing potency of marijuana, which raises significant health concerns, particularly for young people. “The stronger potency means more intense highs but also greater risks, including overdose, withdrawal symptoms, and cannabis use disorder,” Foster explained. Data

from the Barbados Police Service revealed that in 2023, 16% of all offences were drug-related, with cannabis dominating.

Another alarming trend highlighted in the report is the intersection of substance abuse and mental health issues. At the Psychiatric Hospital, 25% of admissions last year involved individuals battling both mental illness and substance use disorders.

This dual challenge has placed increased demand on treatment services, with the majority of cases involving marijuana, alcohol, and crack cocaine.

The report also showed a troubling rise in poly-drug use, as well as synthetic substances like synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones being detected by the Forensic Sciences Centre. Though cases remain relatively small, these findings indicate a growing presence that must not be ignored.

“Where there is smoke, there is fire,” Foster warned, stressing that there are likely more cases that have yet to come into contact with law enforcement or treatment services.

Please visit: [Research Reports \(Local, Regional, International\)](#) to view the report.

Partnership: NCSA's Collaboration with Verdun House



Ms. Allison Gotip Director of Clinical Services, Verdun House and Ms. Paulavette Atkinson Substance Abuse Prevention Officer NCSA were guests on the show on Monday 20th January 2025.

This year, the National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) was proud to partner with the Substance Abuse Foundation on a number of impactful activities aimed at tackling substance abuse and strengthening prevention efforts across Barbados. This collaboration underscored the importance of working together as a community to address the ever-evolving challenges of drug abuse and addiction.

As part of our shared mission, we were featured in three engaging episodes of Mornin' Barbados on Wednesday, January 8th, Monday, January 20th, and Wednesday, January 29th. These appearances provided an excellent platform to highlight upcoming activities, discuss key issues in substance abuse prevention, and invite the public to join us in strengthening prevention efforts.



Mr. Troy Wickham Deputy Manager NCSA and Ms. Nicolette Williams Creative Psychotherapist and Addiction Adolescent Specialist appeared on the show on January 8th 2025.

Each episode featured dynamic conversations aimed at educating the audience about how they could get involved in the fight against substance abuse. From sharing practical tips to fostering greater understanding of the prevention landscape, these discussions helped amplify the message of awareness and action. Representatives from the Substance Abuse Foundation/ Verdun House were also present during the sessions, contributing valuable insights into the ongoing work being done to rehabilitate individuals and support their families.



Mrs. Makeada Bourne, Substance Abuse Prevention Officer at the National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) and Mr. David Waithe, Recovery Coach and Addiction Counsellor appeared on the show on January 29th 2025.

The Board of Directors, Management and Staff at NCSA Would Like To Say Thanks To Team CBC & Its Mornin' Barbados Crew For Having Us On The Programme During Drug Awareness Month 2025 and also to The Substance Abuse Foundation for Partnering With Us! !

Community Walk Through - One Step at a Time!



Some staff members leaving to head out.

The National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) took to the streets of Belleville and its environs for a Community Walk Through as part of Drug Awareness Month 2025. This initiative aimed to strengthen prevention efforts by engaging directly with businesses, residents, and key stakeholders to raise awareness about substance abuse and its impact on individuals, families, and communities.

During the walk, NCSA representatives actively distributed educational materials, providing essential information on substance abuse prevention, available resources, and the importance of seeking help early. These materials included brochures, pamphlets, and contact details for support organizations, ensuring that community members had access to the knowledge they needed. Representatives also engaged in meaningful one-on-one conversations, addressing questions and concerns while emphasizing the importance of early intervention in preventing addiction and substance misuse.

Community members were encouraged to take an active role in the fight against substance abuse by staying informed, spreading awareness, and participating in local prevention programs. They were also urged to create a supportive environment for those at risk by fostering open discussions about substance use and encouraging individuals to seek professional guidance when needed.

Many businesses expressed their appreciation for the initiative, highlighting the importance of tackling substance abuse as a collective effort rather than an individual struggle. Some business owners even pledged to support the cause by displaying NCSA posters and sharing information with their employees and customers.

Through direct engagement and resource sharing, NCSA was able to provide practical guidance to those in need, offering referrals to counselling services, treatment programs, and peer support networks. By fostering open dialogue and increasing visibility, the walk-through proved to be an essential tool in reinforcing the month's theme: "NCSA - Strengthening Prevention." It served as a reminder that prevention starts with awareness, education, and community action, reinforcing the message that everyone has a role to play in reducing the prevalence of substance abuse.

In addition to raising awareness, the walk-through provided an excellent opportunity to invite community members and business representatives to the NCSA Open Day, which was held on January 15th, 2025, at the organization's office. This event offered an in-depth look at the NCSA's ongoing efforts.

Overall, the Community Walk Through was a resounding success, showcasing the power of community engagement in the ongoing battle against substance abuse. By continuing such outreach efforts, NCSA remains committed to its mission of promoting prevention, education, and support to build a healthier, more informed society.



NCSA receptionist and Deputy Manager Troy Wickham interacting with another of our neighbours.

NCSA Open Day: A Closer Look at Prevention Efforts!



On January 15, the doors of the **National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA)** were open to the public, offering an inside look at its prevention initiatives. The Open Day provided a unique opportunity for individuals, schools, and businesses to explore the organization's programs and resources dedicated to substance abuse prevention.

It featured a variety of activities and attractions designed to educate and entertain attendees of all ages. There were Free Health Checks to promote overall wellness and a drug-free lifestyle and Informative Displays and Presentations that highlight the NCSA's programs and initiatives.

Students from secondary and tertiary institutions participated and took time to learn about the challenges of substance abuse and explore how they can be part of the solution.

The Open Day served as a platform to strengthen connections with the community and showcase the NCSA's commitment to fostering healthier, drug-free communities across Barbados.

From informative sessions to engaging

activities, there was something for everyone to enjoy. Persons had the chance to interact with NCSA professionals, learn about counseling services, and understand the impact of community outreach programs, as well as explore educational exhibits showcasing the latest research on substance abuse trends and preventive measures.

Experts and Stakeholders were also on hand to answer questions, dispel myths about addiction, and highlight strategies for early intervention. Many attendees left the event feeling empowered with new knowledge and a clearer understanding of how they could contribute to the cause.

This initiative underscored NCSA's commitment to transparency, partnership and collaboration, encouraging all sectors of society to work together in strengthening prevention efforts. It was an invaluable event that showcased the depth and impact of NCSA's work and inspired many to get involved in ongoing initiatives.

Church Service: Faith in Prevention!



**NCSA Manager Mrs. Betty Hunte
Addressing the Congregation**

The addiction of drugs has become one of the most serious social problems, threatening to erode the gains of our economy and burdening our public health and criminal justice systems.” This is according to Mrs. Betty Hunte Manager of The National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA), in her comments as she addressed the congregation at Silver Sands Church of God on Sunday January 12th, 2025, during a Joint church service with Substance Abuse Foundation as they observe Drug Awareness Month 2025.

Mrs. Hunte described addiction as a profound societal challenge, one that extends far beyond the individual to affect families, workplaces, and communities. She emphasized the importance of understanding addiction not merely as a personal failing but as a societal issue that demands empathy, action, and systemic solutions.

Drawing inspiration from the biblical parable of the prodigal son, she called attention to the power of forgiveness and reintegration.

“Like the prodigal son, many individuals battling addiction find themselves at a crossroads, seeking redemption and a place to call home,” she said. “We must ensure that our communities, including our churches, are spaces of support and restoration.”

In a passionate appeal, she urged the adoption of a Barbados National Anti-Drug Plan to coordinate efforts across the criminal justice system, public health, and social welfare. “This plan would allow us to measure impact, intervene effectively, and reintegrate individuals into society,” she explained.

She also highlighted the changing face of addiction, challenging traditional stereotypes. “Addiction is no longer confined to those we see on the streets. It could be someone sitting next to you in church, silently struggling,” she said. “We must address this issue with compassion and proactive measures, creating environments where people feel supported rather than judged.”

She called on families to engage in open, stigma-free conversations, workplaces to prioritize outreach and worker health, educators to partner with the NCSA in fostering awareness among students, faith leaders to offer hope, forgiveness, and guidance and media professionals to deliver balanced, factual reporting on drug-related issues.

“This isn’t just about individual choices,” she said. “It’s about societal responsibility. Recovery is possible, and we must all play our part in spreading awareness, extending empathy, and advocating for policies that prioritize health and education over punishment.”

She encouraged those present to reach out and help those in need, “If your friend, neighbour, or family member has a drug problem, go to their aid. Join with others—clubs, service groups, community organizations—and provide the support and strength they need. We all have a role to play in this fight, she said.



Its All About The Substance Abuse Badge Day



Facilitators: l-r: Mrs. Wendy Greenidge and Mrs. Makeada Bourne

The National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) proudly concluded its Substance Abuse Badge Day, a two-day online event which was aimed at delivering engaging and age-appropriate drug education to children aged 7-11. Held on January 2nd and 3rd, 2025, this initiative has empowered young minds with the knowledge and skills needed to make informed, healthy life choices.

Participants from Cub Scouts, Brownies, and Seven Day Adventists Adventurers & Pathfinder Groups explored critical topics such as:

- Drugs & Society: Understanding how substance use affects communities.
- Alcohol & Other Drugs: Recognizing the risks associated with legal and illegal substances.
- Drugs & Youth: Highlighting the importance of positive decision-making.

Sessions were facilitated by NCSA's Substance Abuse Prevention Officers, Mrs. Makeada Bourne and Mrs. Wendy Greenidge. This year, the sessions incorporated Nearpod, an educational tool that transformed the learning experience.

By utilizing Nearpod's interactive lessons, and real-time assessment features, facilitators were able to create an engaging and immersive environment for participants. The use of interactive games and activities ensured the content resonated deeply with the children, fostering both understanding and participation.

The Substance Abuse Badge for Organised Youth Groups is an integral part of the NCSA's overarching mission to reduce substance use and abuse across Barbados. It is also among activities that are being held in January as the organisation observe Drug Awareness Month under the theme: NCSA - Strengthening Prevention.

Mrs. Bourne said the program is a testament to the NCSA belief that prevention begins with education. She says by targeting young people during their formative years, they are laying the groundwork for a healthier, drug-free future.

Leaders of participating groups have praised the initiative for its lasting impact on youth development, emphasizing the importance of starting these conversations early. Building on the success of this installment, the NCSA is already planning the next Substance Abuse Badge Day for children aged 7-11 during the Easter vacation. Additionally, a similar program tailored for teenagers is set to be piloted later this year.

The NCSA encourages leaders of organized youth groups to express their interest in upcoming sessions, ensuring even more young Barbadians benefit from this empowering initiative.

Food Drive: Giving Back to Strengthen Prevention



Prevention goes beyond education—it also involves building stronger communities. As part of Drug Awareness Month, NCSA hosted a **Food Drive** on January 25 at Massy locations in Warrens, Worthing, and Hometown, encouraging the public to give back while supporting substance abuse prevention efforts.

With the generous support of donors, a substantial amount of food items was collected and will be distributed to families in need.

This initiative highlighted the connection between social well-being and substance abuse prevention, reinforcing the importance of supporting vulnerable individuals and promoting healthy living. Many of those who donated expressed a strong commitment to the cause, recognizing that poverty and lack of resources can sometimes contribute to substance abuse.

Staff and Volunteers worked tirelessly to sort items so that they can be distributed and ensuring that they reached

those in the community who needed them most.

The success of the Food Drive demonstrated that small acts of kindness contribute to larger prevention efforts. It was a powerful reminder that when communities come together, they can create a positive impact beyond the fight against substance abuse.

By addressing basic needs and fostering a sense of community, initiatives like these help build resilience and create a stronger foundation for prevention.

The Board of Directors, Management and Staff at NCSA Would Like To Say Thanks To Massy Stores for once again giving us the opportunity to use your space at the stores for this worthwhile initiative!

Shaping the Future Young Minds Champion Drug Awareness"



Young voices took center stage at the **Voices of the Youth Speech Contest Finals** on January 31 at Prince Cave Hall. This highly anticipated event provided a platform for students to share their perspectives on substance abuse prevention and advocacy. With powerful and thought-provoking speeches, participants highlighted the importance of making informed choices and resisting peer pressure.

Participants delivered compelling speeches on topics ranging from peer pressure and mental health to the role of education in prevention.

Chief Judge and Distinguished Toastmaster Beverly Parris praised the contestants for their creativity, confidence, and deep understanding of the subject matter. Many speeches explored personal experiences, societal influences, and the need for stronger support systems to prevent substance abuse among youth.

The contest was not just about competition but also about fostering a sense of responsibility and leadership among the younger generation. Parents, teachers, and community leaders who attended were deeply moved by the insights and passion displayed by the contestants. The event concluded with an awards ceremony recognizing the top performers and emphasizing the ongoing importance of youth-led advocacy in drug prevention efforts.

This event served as a reminder that young people play a critical role in shaping a future free from substance abuse. Their powerful messages will continue to inspire efforts toward building stronger, healthier communities. By amplifying their voices, NCSA continues to empower youth to become advocates for positive change.

In the end, Coleridge and Parry's TALESA BOYCE was victorious with *Drinking Like A Man*, Victorie Belgrave of Christ Church Foundation School was second with *What's In Your Box?* And Hailee Harding, of Graydon Sealy Secondary, was third with a speech titled *Be The Smart Seed*.

The ten finalists in the Voices of the Youth Speech Contest were

Davin Browne (Queen's College)
Hailee Harding (Graydon Sealy)
Tristan Spencer (Christ Church Foundation)
Angelique Yearwood (Princess Margaret Secondary)
Malika Straker (Lester Vaughan)
Tonesha Brathwaite (The St Michael School)
TALESA BOYCE (Coleridge and Parry)
Jelicia Lorde (Deighton Griffith),
Kyra Desrivieres (Combermere)
Victorie Belgrave (Christ Church Foundation)

Community Drive Through: Reaching the North with Prevention



The fight against substance abuse took to the roads as the NCSA conducted a Drive Through in the northern communities of Barbados, bringing messages of awareness, education, and prevention directly to residents. The initiative, part of Drug Awareness Month 2025, aimed to extend the reach of the NCSA's mission to areas where community members may not always have access to substance abuse resources.

Equipped with a loudspeaker and engaging messages, NCSA representatives traveled through key neighborhoods, stopping to distribute educational materials and speak with residents about the dangers of substance abuse and the importance of early intervention. The drive-through format allowed the team to cover a broad area while making meaningful connections with individuals and families.

Community members expressed appreciation for the initiative, acknowledging that substance abuse prevention is a shared responsibility. Many residents took the opportunity to ask questions and gain a deeper understanding of the services available to those struggling with addiction. The event underscored the importance of proactive outreach in ensuring that no one is left without access to vital support and resource.



NCSA's Fun Fitness Friday: Building Stronger Communities Through Sports

The National Council on Substance Abuse (NCSA) wrapped up Drug Awareness Month with a memorable Fun Fitness Friday & Olympics event. Held at Carlton Club in Lower Carlton, Black Rock, St. Michael, this exciting day brought together various stakeholders, including NCSA staff, the Judiciary, Ministry of Home Affairs & Information, Ministry of Youth, Sports & Community Empowerment, Barbados Fire Service, the Post Office, Prisons, and many other agencies and community members who share a commitment to promoting a drug-free society.

The goal of this annual event is to foster inter-agency collaboration, encourage team building, and promote healthy lifestyles through engaging in fun sports activities.

With a variety of events ranging from sprints to cricket to football, and even relay challenges, the field came alive with energy, enthusiasm, and spirited sportsmanship. Participants displayed not only their athletic abilities but also their unwavering dedication to teamwork, perseverance, and personal wellness.

Throughout the day, the atmosphere was filled with laughter, cheers, and camaraderie, creating an environment where individuals from different

agencies could connect, engage, and strengthen partnerships in an informal and enjoyable setting.

This initiative was not just about competition but also about fostering positive relationships and reinforcing the importance of health and well-being as fundamental elements in the fight against substance abuse.

The Fun Fitness Friday & Olympics event was an essential highlight of Drug Awareness Month, serving as a powerful reminder that prevention starts with promoting wellness, healthy habits, and a sense of community. By incorporating physical activity into substance abuse prevention efforts, the NCSA underscores the significance of a holistic approach to tackling drug-related issues. Exercise, teamwork, and recreation provide constructive outlets that contribute to mental and physical well-being, reducing the likelihood of substance use and encouraging positive lifestyle choices.

Take a look at some of the day's highlights and join us in celebrating the success of this event! For more photos, stories, and details, feel free to visit our webpage and social media pages.

Let's continue working together to strengthen prevention, promote healthier lifestyles, and build a community free from substance abuse!



Our Message, Your Platform: Thank You, Media!

The media has been an essential partner in our outreach efforts over the years. Through their support, our prevention messages have reached wider audiences, and they have helped to promote various initiatives aimed at encouraging individuals to combat drug abuse through sports, healthy living, and community support.

This year's Drug Awareness Month was no exception. Multiple media houses local and regionally provided coverage of our activities, amplifying our mission and engaging with our efforts. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to them for their continued collaboration and commitment to raising awareness.

Below are just some of the coverage during the month. You can click on the links to view and read.

[NCSA Manager Calls For Collective Action Against Drug Addiction | GIS](#)
[Youth voices crucial in drug abuse prevention, says NCSA - Barbados Today](#)
[NCSA manager calls for community action - Barbados Today](#)
[Defence boost against emerging drug threats - Barbados Today](#)
[NCSA praises public condemnation over rising drug threats - Barbados Today](#)
[NCSA turning focus to synthetic drugs - nationnews.com](#)
[NCSA: We're here to help - nationnews.com](#)
['All hands on deck' in drug abuse fight - nationnews.com](#)
[NCSA monitoring new psychoactive drug discovered in Argentina - Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation](#)
[NCSA to release detailed drug report to the public - Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation](#)
[NCSA keeping close eye on non traditional drugs - Caribbean Broadcasting Corporation](#)
[NCSA Manager Calls for Collective Action - Advomag](#)

Thank You for Strengthening Prevention See You in 2026!

As we wrap up Drug Awareness Month 2025, we take this moment to express our deepest gratitude to everyone who contributed to making this year's observance a resounding success! From our dedicated partners and supporters to volunteers, media representatives, schools, businesses, and community members—you all played a vital role in spreading awareness, promoting prevention, and fostering a healthier, drug-free society.

Your participation, whether through attending events, sharing our messages, engaging in discussions, or simply supporting the cause, has reinforced the importance of collective action in the fight against substance abuse. Every conversation sparked, every resource shared, and every initiative embraced brings us closer to a future where prevention is a priority, and communities are empowered to make positive choices.

While Drug Awareness Month has officially ended, the work continues. Prevention is not just a one-month effort—it's a commitment we must carry forward every day. We look ahead to 2026 with excitement and renewed dedication, and we invite you to continue standing with us. Together, let's keep the momentum going, strengthen prevention, and build a safer, healthier future for all.

Thank you once again, and see you in 2026!