

# What YOU can do to end drug prohibition

In order to end drug prohibition four things need to occur:

- Reformers need to organize.
- Information about the failures of the current system and potential benefits (and challenges) of a new approach needs to be shared widely.
- Discussions need to happen.
- Politicians and other leaders need to be persuaded that it is in their best interest to talk about ending prohibition.

The battleground for change will be in the media. Journalists and reporters need to be engaged in the process where ever possible.

## **Get organized**

- Join existing drug policy reform groups and / or start new a new group, meet regularly, plan and implement strategies.
- Contribute money, resources and time to existing groups!!!!
- Go to drug policy reform conferences to share ideas and meet people.
- Organize fund raising events.

## **Share Information**

- Educate yourself. Explore the internet, read books, find and understand the research ([www.whyprohibition.ca](http://www.whyprohibition.ca), [www.drugwarfacts.org](http://www.drugwarfacts.org), [www.tdpf.org.uk](http://www.tdpf.org.uk), [www.drugpolicy.org](http://www.drugpolicy.org), etc)
- Share the best of the above with family, friends and community.
- Learn the language of change. Talk about the need to regulate and control all currently illegal drugs based on human rights and public health principles – not “drug legalization” and the need to “protect our children – end prohibition now”. See the document “questions, answers and soundbytes at [www.markhaden.com](http://www.markhaden.com))
- Find good books and recommend them to your local library.
- Give research information on the failures of drug prohibition to students and encourage them to write papers on this topic.
- Join email list-serves where you get regular information about what is happening.
- Make distribution lists and then tweet, facebook, email and spam others with the information.
- Start a web site where you share information.
- Develop an information brochure and hand this out widely.
- Come out of the closet – take about your own experiences.

## **Promoting Discussion**

- Hold events which support open public discussions – invite speakers to share their ideas. Invite the media to attend and participate where possible. Be prepared for lots of tears when people speak as prohibition is the source of a lot of pain and suffering in many people’s lives.
- Show up to existing drug policy reform events, offer your support and speak your truth.

- Ask health officials / managers why they are not speaking out about the need to promote of a health perspective to drugs and challenge the criminalization of drugs. Show them that the research shows that criminalization of drugs increases both health and social problems and remind them that they say that their approach is “evidence based”.
- Ask the police what evidence they have for supporting drug prohibition and ask them why they are not encouraging alternative approaches to reducing drug use and associated harms, as the research shows that criminalization of drug users encourages crime.
- Be honest with your children. Teach them about both the harms from drugs and the harms from drug prohibition.
- Buy or make bumper stickers, T shirts, mugs, stickers with catchy slogans and use them everywhere.
- Stage visually dramatic events, take lots of pictures, send to the media and post on the web. Examples: Put up crosses in a park with the names of all the people who have died from illegal drugs, carry a coffin into city hall, hang a drug war dummy, have groups with logo T shirts in interesting locations.
- Call in to radio talk shows after memorizing the soundbytes of change.

### **Influencing politicians and leaders**

- Talk to the leaders. Find people who play a leadership role in a variety of communities (e.g. faith communities, civil rights groups, health groups, citizen action groups, union leaders, aboriginal groups, etc) and share the research with them and ask them to help.
- Write a letter to a politician - “yes” this makes a difference.
- Set up a table in a public place where you have a variety of text / sentences / Q&A’s on small sheets of paper exploring a range of reasons to end drug prohibition. Ask people who walk by to write a letter, either in their own words or using the supplied text supporting the cause. Keep and copy the letters and meet with politicians and the media and give them the letters. Save the copies and repeat.
- Write letters to the media.
- Participate in online polls and sign online letters and declarations and share the links to these widely (e.g. Vienna Declaration)
- When you see an article in the news about drugs, prohibition or HIV, etc find the article online and contribute a thoughtful, compassionate response in the comments section. Assume politicians are reading what you say and present yourself as a concerned member of mainstream society who wants to reduce the damage done to our children by drug prohibition.
- Organize peaceful public demonstrations or go to existing protests. Take professional looking banners, signs to be waved, brochures and bullhorn (with new batteries). Memorize catchy chants.
- Vote for politicians who support freedom / liberty and against politicians who promote fear of others.

Be prepared to be persistent as lots of polite repetition is required.