

MARIJUANA: WHAT'S AT STAKE?

How do changes in marijuana policy impact the health and safety of our communities and our children?

What does the evidence say about teen marijuana use?

- **Marijuana can be addictive.** The earlier someone begins using marijuana, the higher their risk of addiction -- one in six users who start under age 18 become dependent; 25-50% of teen heavy users become addicted.¹
- **Marijuana today is not the marijuana of the 1970s.** Highly concentrated marijuana products available today range from 5 to 85% THC (the psychoactive part of marijuana). High potency marijuana, often in the form of candies, cookies, sodas, and hashish concentrates (e.g., budder, wax, honey oil, shatter), are more likely to be associated with addiction and the negative health consequences in young people seen in recent years.²
- **Marijuana use has long-term negative consequences for kids.** According to studies by the National Academy of Sciences and other organizations, marijuana use by adolescents can impair brain development, reduce academic success, impact long-term career growth, and even lower IQ. Marijuana is associated with long-term health risks, including increased susceptibility to mental health issues (e.g., paranoia, depression, suicidal thoughts, and schizophrenia) and heart attacks.^{3,4,5,6,7,8,9,10}
- **Marijuana use/dependency is associated with addiction to other drugs.** In a prospective study, marijuana use was associated with a 6.2 times (620%) higher risk of developing any substance use disorder. The younger marijuana is used, the higher the rates of addiction to marijuana and to other drugs, including opioids.^{11,12}

What do the experiences of other states tell us?

- **Where marijuana is legal, young people are more likely to use it.** Since becoming the first state to legalize, Colorado has also become the #1 state in the nation for teen marijuana use. Teen use jumped 20% in Colorado in the two years since legalization, even as that rate has declined nationally.^{13,14, 17}
- **Colorado saw a 49% increase in marijuana-related emergency room visits during the two years after marijuana was legalized (2013-14) compared with the two years before.** High potency edible products have also been associated with negative consequences for adults who may fail to pay attention to serving sizes, leading to overexposure to marijuana.^{14, 15, 16, 17}
- **Colorado has seen an increase in traffic deaths caused by operators testing positive for marijuana.** Since 2013, marijuana-related traffic deaths have increased 62%.^{14,16, 17}
- **Increase in accidental marijuana use by young children.** According to data from the National Poison Data System, accidental exposure to marijuana among children under 6 years old has been on the rise. Marijuana infused products such as gummy bears, candy bars and “cannabis cola” are often indistinguishable from traditional products and attractive to children, placing them at significant risk of accidental use.^{14,16, 17}

¹Comparative Epidemiology of Dependence on Tobacco, Alcohol, Controlled Substances, and Inhalants: Basic Findings From the National Comorbidity Survey,” Experimental and Clinical Psychopharmacology, 1994; ²Potency trends of Δ9-THC and other cannabinoids in confiscated cannabis preparations from 1993 to 2008. *J Forensic Sci.*, 2010. ³Persistent cannabis users show neuropsychological decline from childhood to midlife. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A.*, 2012. ⁴Impact of adolescent marijuana use on intelligence: Results from two longitudinal twin studies,” Proceedings of the National Academy of Science of the United States of America; ⁵Cannabis use and depression: a longitudinal study of a national cohort of Swedish conscripts. *BMC Psychiatry*, 2012. ⁶Marijuana Use and High School Dropout: The Influence of Unobservables. *Health Econ.*, 2010. ⁷Proportion of patients in south London with first-episode psychosis attributable to use of high potency cannabis: a case-control study. *The Lancet Psychiatry*, 2015. ⁸Daily use, especially of high-potency cannabis, drives the earlier onset of psychosis in cannabis users. *Schizophrenia Bulletin.*, 2014. ⁹Marijuana use in the immediate 5-year pre-morbid period is associated with increased risk of onset of schizophrenia and related psychotic disorders. *Schizophrenia Research*, 2015. ¹⁰Adverse cardiovascular, cerebrovascular, and peripheral vascular effects of marijuana inhalation: what cardiologists need to know. *Am J Cardiol.*, 2014. ¹¹Cannabis Use and Risk of Psychiatric Disorders: Prospective Evidence From a US National Longitudinal Study. *JAMA Psychiatry*, 2016. ¹²Young adult sequelae of adolescent cannabis use: an integrative analysis. 2014. ¹³20 percent increase in youth marijuana use,” *WSAV*, 1/13/2016; SAMHSA National Survey on Drug Use and Health, December 17, 2015; ¹⁴The Legalization of marijuana in Colorado: The Impact,” Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, September 2015. ¹⁵Marijuana Tourism and Emergency Department Visits in Colorado,” *The New England Journal of Medicine*, 2/25/2016. ¹⁶The Implications of Marijuana Legalization in Colorado. *Journal of the American Medical Association*. 2015. ¹⁷The Legalization of marijuana in Colorado: The Impact,” Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, Vol. 4, September 2016.