



The Coalition Position Statement Against Legalization of Recreational Use of Marijuana

As a community partnership focused on preventing youth substance abuse and strengthening the social/emotional well-being of tri-town youth, we are strongly opposed to legalizing marijuana for recreational use. While the normative behavior among our youth currently is to not use marijuana, (78% of HS youth choose NOT to use), marijuana use surpasses all other illegal drug use combined. As youth age, participation in substance use tends to increase and is illustrated in our local data. 3 cycles of YRBS data show Masco 10th, 11th and 12th grade past 30 day marijuana use above national use rates. And in 2014, past 30 day marijuana use rates among then Masco seniors was above the 2013 12th grade Massachusetts use rates. Our youth increasingly, yet erroneously, believe marijuana is not harmful. Their perception of risk of harm declined sharply in 2014 (a decrease of 34% from 61% to 27%) over 2012. {*Masconomet Youth Risk Behavior Surveys 2010, 2012 & 2014*}

Marijuana has long term negative health effects on youth.

- **Marijuana is addictive.** According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, 1 in 11 marijuana users become addicted. For those who start using in adolescence, addiction rates increase to 17%. Roughly three-quarters of 12 – 17 year olds who enter drug treatment programs do so because of marijuana addiction. (*NIDA, Drug Facts, 2012*)
- **Marijuana is the primary drug for youth seeking treatment in Massachusetts.** According to the [Bureau of Substance Abuse Services 2012 Adolescent Admissions Fact Sheet](#) 54% of youth admitted were seeking treatment for marijuana addiction, and 86% of admitted youth reported past year use of marijuana.
- **Marijuana interferes with brain development.** Significant bursts of brain development happen in adolescence. A growing number of [studies compiled by researchers at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee](#) show regular marijuana use — once a week or more — actually changes the structure of the teenage brain, specifically in areas dealing with memory and problem solving which can affect cognition and academic performance.
- **Marijuana is much more potent today than in years past.** Study results of 600 marijuana samples presented at the American Chemical Society in March of 2015 found that THC levels (mind altering ingredient) in marijuana have risen 3 fold in the last few decades while the therapeutic ingredient CBD has fallen. (Source [here.](#))

ⁱThis position does not negate current Massachusetts' laws that govern the use of marijuana for medical reasons.



Colorado and Washington, which legalized marijuana in 2012, have experienced negative consequences. ([Lessons After 2 Years of Marijuana Legalization Report, January 2015](#))

- **High youth use rates.** Each state that has legalized marijuana (Colorado, Oregon, Washington and Alaska) appeared on the 2013—2014 top 10 list of highest youth use rates per [SAMHSA](#). **Massachusetts and all New England states** (with the exception of Connecticut) **are already in the top 10.** (NSDUH, December 2015 – [www.samhsa.gov](#))
- **Teen treatment admissions are up.** Teens admitted to Colorado’s Arapahoe House Treatment network for marijuana use climbed 66% since 2011.
- **Accidental ingestions are up.** [Per the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area 2015 report](#), since 2012, marijuana related emergency room visits and hospitalizations have increased 83% and 70% in Colorado, and are largely due to overconsumption of marijuana edibles. The THC concentrate in edibles is significantly more potent (by 70% or more) than the bud form of marijuana. (Source: [here](#)) Per the Children’s Hospital of Colorado, the number of young children (ages 3—7) being seen in the ER due to unintentional ingestion of marijuana products doubled from 2013 to 2014. The Washington Poison Center reports similar increases in accidental ingestion, excessive inhalation/consumption of marijuana and edibles—particularly among children.
- **Use rates on the rise overall.** Colorado and Washington’s 30 day marijuana use rates are **above national averages across all age levels.**
- **Increase in “drugged driving” citations.** In Aurora and Denver the number of citations issued for driving under the influence of marijuana climbed 23% and 57% from 2013 to 2014. [Marijuana is directly linked to impaired driving](#). A meta-analysis published in the peer-reviewed 2012 edition of Epidemiological Reviews looked at nine studies conducted over the past two decades on marijuana and car-crash risk. Researchers concluded that drivers who test positive for marijuana or self-report marijuana use are **more than twice as likely** to be in a motor vehicle accident.
- **Legal marijuana is leaving the state.** In 2013, there were 288 highway seizures of Colorado marijuana destined for other states—an increase of 397% since 2008.

As we are committed to supporting the health and well-being of tri-town youth, for these reasons, we cannot, in good conscience, support legalization of marijuana in Massachusetts.

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