

## **Background: Facts About Marijuana**

### ***CURRENT MARIJUANA RATES AMONG YOUTH***

- Research demonstrates that illegal drug use among youth increases as the perception of risk and social disapproval declines.
- According to the most recent Monitoring the Future (MTF) Study, the perception of harm for regular marijuana use among 12<sup>th</sup> graders has declined steadily since 2008, when 52% of high school seniors believed using marijuana regularly was dangerous, compared to only 39.5% in 2013.
- Also according to the most recent (2013) MTF Study:
  - More 8<sup>th</sup>, 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> graders are smoking marijuana than cigarettes every 30 days; and
  - 6.5% of high school seniors smoked marijuana on a daily basis
- **“Medical” marijuana states are clustered at the top of the list in terms of drug addiction and abuse among 12-17 year olds.<sup>i</sup>**

### ***MARIJUANA IS ADDICTIVE***

- 1 in 11 people who ever start using marijuana become addicted.<sup>ii</sup> In adolescence, the addiction rates jump to 1 in 6.<sup>iii</sup> Increased use rates lead to higher addiction rates.
- More than two-thirds of treatment admissions involving those under the age of 18 cite marijuana as their primary substance of abuse, more than 15 times the rate for alcohol alone.<sup>iv</sup>

### ***AGE OF INITIATION IS CRITICAL***

- Children who first smoke marijuana under the age of 14 are more than five times as likely to abuse drugs as adults, than those who first use marijuana at age 18.<sup>v</sup>
- In the 1970s, the average age of initiation for marijuana was 19. In 2011, the average age of initiation was 17.5.<sup>vi</sup> The age of initiation for marijuana use is moving in the wrong direction.

### ***MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION WILL INCREASE ACCESS AND AVAILABILITY***

- States with medical marijuana laws that have been implemented to include home cultivation and legal dispensaries **are positively associated with increased marijuana use** in these states.<sup>vii</sup>

### ***MARIJUANA USE NEGATIVELY IMPACTS IQ***

- A recent study found that those who used marijuana heavily in their teens and continued through adulthood showed a permanent drop in IQ of 8 points. This held true when controlled for socioeconomic status.<sup>viii</sup>
- A loss of 8 IQ points could drop a person of average intelligence into the lowest third of the intelligence range.

### ***MARIJUANA USE NEGATIVELY IMPACTS EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT***

- Youth with an average grade of D or below were more than four times as likely to have used marijuana in the past year as youth with an average grade of A.<sup>ix</sup>
- High school students who use alcohol or other drugs are up to five times more likely to drop out of school.<sup>x</sup>

### ***MARIJUANA USE NEGATIVELY IMPACTS SCHOOL ENVIRONMENT***

- 66.1% of serious disciplinary actions in public high schools can be attributed to the distribution, possession or use of illegal drugs.<sup>xi</sup>

### ***MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION WILL NEGATIVELY IMPACT COMMUNITIES OF COLOR***

- Overall, 34% of American adults aged 18 and older rate drug abuse as one of their top health concerns for kids – but 39% of Hispanic adults view youth drug abuse as their number one concern.<sup>xii</sup>
- If the marijuana industry is like the alcohol industry, there will be more marijuana outlets and marijuana advertisements found in low-income minority communities.<sup>xiii</sup>

### **MARIJUANA POTENCY IS INCREASING**

- In the last 20 years (between 1983 and 2013), the average THC level has nearly tripled. Currently, the average level of THC in seized samples is 15.1%. This compares to an average of less than 4% in 1983.<sup>xiv</sup>

### **MARIJUANA IS BEING MARKETED TO CHILDREN**

- Despite the fact that all of the states that have approved “medical marijuana” initiatives or legalized marijuana have regulations restricting its use to those 18 and older, marijuana is clearly being marketed to children in the form of edibles. This is evidenced by the fact that products such as “Pot Tarts;” “Ring Pots,” “Orange Kush” soda; brownies, etc., are being sold – some even in vending machines.



### **MARIJUANA IS HARMFUL TO CHILDREN**

- Between 2005 and 2009, none of poisonings in children under age 12 at the Children’s Hospital of Colorado involved marijuana. Since 2009, 2% of poisonings in children under 12 involved marijuana.<sup>xv</sup>

### **MARIJUANA USE NEGATIVELY IMPACTS HIGHWAY SAFETY**

- According to the Colorado Department of Transportation, drivers who tested positive for marijuana in fatal car crashes DOUBLED between 2006 and 2010 (after the dispensaries were opened) while all other fatal car crashes declined for the same time period.<sup>xvi</sup>
- 1 in 5 (or 19% of) teen drivers report that they have driven under the influence of marijuana. Only 13% of teen drivers report that they have driven under the influence of alcohol.<sup>xvii</sup>

### **MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION WILL NOT RESULT IN INCREASED REVENUE**

- Taxes on marijuana will never pay for the increased social costs that would result from more users. Our nation’s experiences with alcohol and tobacco show that for every dollar gained in taxes, we spent 10 on social costs.<sup>xviii</sup>
- Legalizing marijuana will open the doors to a “gray-market”, which would thrive under legalization in order to undercut the legal, taxed market.<sup>xix</sup> That is why the criminal market will not disappear under legalization.
- According to a recent RAND study, legalization will cause the price of marijuana to fall and its use to rise, especially among youth.<sup>xx</sup>

### **MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION WILL NOT REDUCE CRIMINAL ORGANIZATIONS**

- Marijuana accounts for only a portion of the proceeds gained by criminal organizations that profit from heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine distribution, human trafficking, and other crimes. Legalizing marijuana would not deter these groups from continuing to operate.<sup>xxi</sup>

### **MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION WILL NOT REDUCE INCARCERATION RATES**

- According to the United States Sentencing Commission, in 2008, 6,337 people were sentenced in federal court for drug crimes related to marijuana. Of these 6,337, only 1.6% were sentenced for simple possession of marijuana.
- According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics, only 0.4% of prisoners with no prior offenses are in state prisons for marijuana offenses.

- <sup>i</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). (2011). State Estimates from the 2009-2010 National Surveys on Drug Use and Health.
- <sup>ii</sup> Wagner, F.A. & Anthony, J.C. From first drug use to drug dependence; developmental periods of risk for dependence upon cannabis, cocaine, and alcohol. *Neuropsychopharmacology* 26, 479-488 (2002). Available: <http://www.nature.com/npp/journal/v26/n4/pdf/1395810a.pdf>
- <sup>iii</sup> National Institutes of Health, National Institute on Drug Abuse. 2011. *Topics in Brief: Marijuana*. Available: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/topics-in-brief/marijuana>
- <sup>iv</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. 2010. Office of Applied Studies. Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS): 2009 Discharges from Substance Abuse Treatment Services, DASIS. Available: <http://www.dasis.samhsa.gov/webt/quicklink/US10.htm>  
Also see Non-medical cannabis: Rite of passage or Russian roulette? 2011.Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse, Columbia University.
- <sup>v</sup> The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) report. August 23, 2002. Available: <http://oas.samhsa.gov/2k2/MJ&dependence/MJdependence.htm>
- <sup>vi</sup> Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. Available: <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/mjinitiation/highlights.htm> and <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/NSDUH/2k11Results/NSDUHresults2011.htm>
- <sup>vii</sup> Pacula, R.L., Powell, D., Heaton, P., Sevingy, E.L. (2013). Assessing the effects of medical marijuana laws on marijuana and alcohol use: The devil is in the details. Available: <http://www.nber.org/papers/w19302>
- <sup>viii</sup> M.H. Meier, Avshalom Caspi, et al. 2012. "Persistent cannabis users show neuropsychological decline from childhood to midlife." Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences
- <sup>ix</sup> Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). *SAMHSA's National Household Survey on Drug Abuse Report—Marijuana Use among Youths*. July 19, 2002. Available at [www.samhsa.gov/oas/nhsda.htm](http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/nhsda.htm).
- <sup>x</sup> Lane, J., Gerstein, D., Huang, L., & Wright, D., (1998) *Risk and protective factors for adolescent drug use: Findings from the 1997 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse*. [Online]. Available at [www.samhsa.gov/hhsurvey/hhsurvey.html](http://www.samhsa.gov/hhsurvey/hhsurvey.html); Bray, J.W., Zarkin, G.A., Ringwalt, C., & Qi, J. (2000). "The relationship between marijuana initiation and dropping out of high school." *Health Economics*, 9(1), 9–18.
- <sup>xi</sup> U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, 2009-10 School Survey on Crime and Safety (SSOCS), 2010.
- <sup>xii</sup> C.S. Mott Children's Hospital, August 19, 2013. University of Michigan. Volume 19, Issue 2. National Poll on Children's Health.
- <sup>xiii</sup> Alaniz, MA. Alcohol Availability and Targeted Advertising in Racial/Ethnic Minority Communities. *Alcohol Health & Research World*. 1998; 22(4): 286-289.
- <sup>xiv</sup> Potency Monitoring Program Quarterly Report Number 120, Reporting Period December 16, 2012 – March 15, 2013. Mahmoud ElSohly, Director, NIDA Marijuana Project. P.7.
- <sup>xv</sup> Wang G, Roosevelt G, Heard K. Pediatric Marijuana Exposures in a Medical Marijuana State. *JAMA Pediatr*. 2013;():1-4. doi:10.1001/jamapediatrics.2013.140. Available: <http://archpedi.jamanetwork.com/article.aspx?articleid=1691416>
- <sup>xvi</sup> *Colorado Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS)*. August 2011.
- <sup>xvii</sup> Hazy Logic: Liberty Mutual Insurance/SADD Study Finds Driving Under the Influence of Marijuana a Greater Threat to Teen Drivers Than Alcohol. Available: <http://www.sadd.org/press/presspdfs/Marijuana%20Teen%20Release.pdf>
- <sup>xviii</sup> Rehm J, Mathers C, Popova S, Thavorncharoensap M, Teerawattananon Y, Patra J. 2009 Jun 27. "Global burden of disease and injury and economic cost attributable to alcohol use and alcohol-use disorders." *Lancet* ;373(9682): 2223-33. [Table 4].
- <sup>xix</sup> Kilmer, B., Caulkins, J. P., Pacula, R. L., MacCoun, R. J., & Reuter, P. H. 2010. "Altered State? Assessing How marijuana Legalization in California Could Influence Marijuana Consumption and Public Budgets." Santa Monica, CA: RAND Drug Policy Research Center. Available: [http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional\\_papers/2010/RAND\\_OP315.pdf](http://www.rand.org/content/dam/rand/pubs/occasional_papers/2010/RAND_OP315.pdf)
- <sup>xx</sup> Kilmer, Beau, Jonathan P. Caulkins, Rosalie Liccardo Pacula, Robert J. MacCoun and Peter H. Reuter. 2010. "Altered State? Assessing How Marijuana Legalization in California Could Influence Marijuana Consumption and Public Budgets." Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, [http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional\\_papers/OP315](http://www.rand.org/pubs/occasional_papers/OP315).
- <sup>xxi</sup> U.S. Sentencing Commission, "2008 Sourcebook of Federal Sentencing Statistics, see: <http://www.ussc.gov/ANNRPT/2008/SBTOC08.htm>, Table 33.

