



**ALLIANCE**  
OF COALITIONS  
for Healthy Communities



# **PREVENT**

## **Youth Marijuana Use**

**Toolkit For**  
**Parents & Caregivers**



## ABOUT THE ALLIANCE & THIS TOOLKIT

The Alliance is a network of 21+ community prevention coalitions serving 55+ local communities. The Alliance is comprised of individuals and organizations who share our commitment to building healthy and drug-free communities. This toolkit is a resource to help educate on making healthy choices including how to take preventative measures and reduce risk factors for substance abuse.



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## WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT RISK AND PROTECTIVE FACTORS

### WHAT ARE RISK FACTORS?

Risk factors are characteristics at the biological, psychological, family, community, or cultural level that precede and are associated with a higher likelihood of negative outcomes. Risk factors can include, lack of parental involvement or supervision, family history of substance misuse, low self-confidence, and mental health problems (SAMHSA).

### WHAT ARE PROTECTIVE FACTORS?

Protective factors are characteristics associated with a lower likelihood of negative outcomes or that reduce a risk factor's impact. Protective factors may be seen as positive countering events (SAMHSA).

### HOW TO BUILD PROTECTIVE FACTORS FOR YOUR CHILD

- Parental resilience: Manages stress and functions well when faced with challenges, adversity, and trauma.
- Social connections: Builds positive relationships that provide emotional, informational, instrumental, and spiritual support.
- Knowledge of parenting and child development: Understands child development and parenting strategies that support physical, cognitive, language, social, and emotional development.
- Concrete support in times of need: Has access to support and/or services (e.g., healthy food; a safe environment; specialized medical, mental health, social, educational, and legal services, as needed) that address a family's needs and help minimize stress caused by challenges.
- Social-emotional competence of children: Encourages family and child interactions that help children develop the ability to communicate clearly, recognize and regulate their emotions, and establish and maintain relationships (childwelfare.gov).

Sources: <https://www.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/20190718-samhsa-risk-protective-factors.pdf>; [childwelfare.gov](http://childwelfare.gov)

## RISK FACTORS

- Belief that there are little or no risks associated with marijuana use.
- Easy access to marijuana.
- Exposure to peer pressure or a social environment where there is drug use.
- Lack of parental supervision and/or exposure to marijuana use in the home.
- Past or present use of other substances, including alcohol.



Source: NIDA; Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know, p22

## WHAT YOU CAN DO/PREVENTION

### HAVE THE CONVERSATION

As some children begin experimenting with alcohol, tobacco and marijuana as young as age 10, it is important to start the conversation early and continue throughout the teen years. Communicate your values and message clearly. Make sure you are up to date on the risks and legal ramifications of youth marijuana use. Share your concern for their health and safety. Discuss any family history of substance use disorder.

### HAVE A CLEAR MESSAGE

Substance use is not a rite of passage, and not all kids experiment with drugs or alcohol. Teens who use substances have more problems with school, the law, their health and forming healthy relationships. Let them know there are consequences to substance use – both in terms of their health and for breaking your rules.

### SET A GOOD EXAMPLE

Your children are watching, listening, and learning. Secure any cannabis in your home.

### USE TEACHABLE MOMENTS AND NORMALIZE THE DISCUSSION

Use that time in the car or when there's a story about substance abuse in the news to have the discussion.

### GET HELP AT THE FIRST SIGN OF TROUBLE

Parents often underestimate the seriousness of drug use, especially with alcohol and marijuana. Seek out a professional and ask for help. Reach out to a guidance counselor or call a nearby counseling center to access prevention education and intervention services or for an evaluation. Your child's future depends on it.

Source: Rosecrance; Teens & Weed: Still a Big Deal, A Parent's Guide to Talking with a Teenager About Marijuana

## WARNING SIGNS

- Changes in behavior, such as carelessness with grooming, mood changes and deteriorating relationships with family members and friends.
- Changes in academic performance, skipping school, getting in trouble at school.
- Seems unusually giggly and/or uncoordinated.
- Very red, bloodshot eyes or frequently using eye drops.
- Having a hard time remembering things that just happened.
- Drug paraphernalia, including clothing, jewelry, posters, vape pens, pipes, grinders and rolling papers (perhaps claiming they belong to a friend, if confronted).
- Strangely smelling clothes or bedroom and/or using incense and other deodorizers.
- Unexplained lack of money or a surplus of cash on hand.



NIDA; Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know, p22

## DID YOU KNOW?

- Recreational marijuana use is illegal for anyone under the age of 21.
- Marijuana can be addictive. Research suggests 30 percent of users may develop some form of problem use, which can lead to dependence and addiction. People who begin using marijuana before age 18 are 4 to 7 times more likely than adults to develop problem use.
- Marijuana is unsafe if you are behind the wheel. Marijuana compromises judgment and affects many other skills required for safe driving: alertness, concentration, coordination and reaction time.
- Perception of harm. In Oakland County, only 45 percent of high school students report thinking that smoking marijuana once or twice a week to be a moderate or great risk.
- Marijuana is associated with school failure. Marijuana has negative effects on attention, motivation, memory and learning that can persist after the drug's immediate effects wear off - especially in regular users. Compared with their non-smoking peers, students who smoke marijuana tend to get lower grades and are more likely to drop out of high school.
- Marijuana potency has increased. In the 1990s, average THC content was roughly 4 percent for marijuana; in 2021 it was 15.34 percent. Methods of use have also changed. Cannabis is often consumed via edibles, vape pens, THC oils, dabs and wax concentrates. Marijuana concentrates can contain up to 90 percent pure THC.
- Marijuana affects mental and emotional development. Marijuana use can be especially toxic to a developing teenager's brain. It can lead to impaired short-term memory, perception, judgment and motor skills. Regular marijuana use has been associated with depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts and personality disturbances.

Sources: NIDA; Marijuana, July 2018 ; NIDA; Marijuana: Facts Parents Need to Know, p6,7,19,20 ; <https://nida.nih.gov/research/research-data-measures-resources/cannabis-potency-data> ; 2022 Oakland County MIPHY



## TALKING TO YOUR KIDS

*Conversations are a powerful tool parents can use to connect with and protect kids. Here are some facts that can help when tackling a tough topic such as marijuana.*

### WHY ARE YOU TELLING MY KID TO WAIT INSTEAD OF NOT USE MARIJUANA?

Your question makes a lot of sense. Our goal is to encourage kids to NOT use. The longer they wait, the more time their brains have to develop. Waiting means not using. Research also tells us that youth who wait are less likely to ever use or become dependent if they do try it as adults.

### WELL, IF MARIJUANA IS LEGAL, WHY BOTHER WITH PREVENTION?

It's legal for adults over 21. Youth brains are still developing well into the mid 20's. We know young brains are very sensitive to the effects of THC. There are also social and/or legal consequences like losing scholarships or financial aid for post-secondary schooling or getting arrested.

### IS MARIJUANA THAT BIG OF A DEAL? AREN'T ALCOHOL AND CIGARETTES MORE DANGEROUS AND ADDICTIVE?

THC, the active chemical in marijuana and cannabis products, is much more concentrated in today's marijuana, so the teen brain can be affected more than ever. Using substances of any kind primes the brain for dependency and addiction.

### MY DOCTOR RECOMMENDED MARIJUANA FOR A MEDICAL CONDITION. ARE YOU SAYING MY MEDICINE IS BAD?

Every person should work with their doctor to address the potential risks and benefits of ALL medications, including proper storage and restricting access to youth. It's also important to secure all cannabis products and medication away from children.

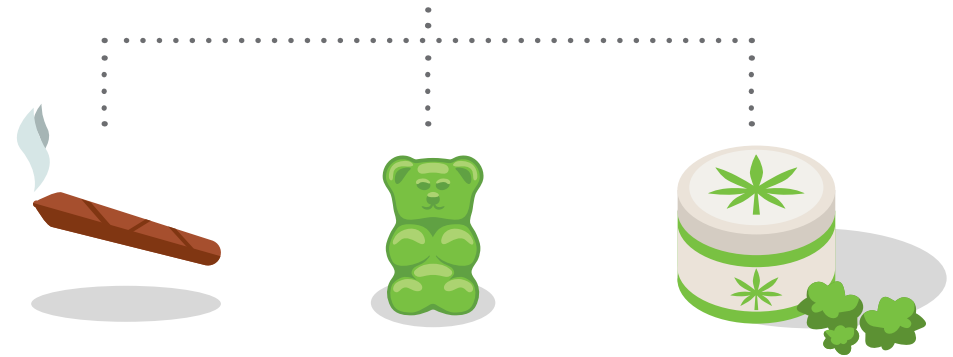
## AS LONG AS MY TEEN STAYS HOME WHEN THEY USE MARIJUANA, I DON'T THINK IT'S A BIG DEAL. WHY NOT KEEP THEM SAFE IF THEY ARE GOING TO DO IT ANYWAY?

Most teens DON'T use and there are many ways to have fun or cope with stress that don't involve using marijuana. We want parents to know the facts and why weed can wait. It is also illegal for adults to provide marijuana to minors and that parents don't have to be anti-cannabis to support youth prevention.

### I SMOKED POT AS A TEENAGER AND TURNED OUT FINE. WHY ALL THE JUDGMENTAL PROPAGANDA?

Today's marijuana is 10-30 times stronger than the average weed of the 70s, 80s and 90s. There are also more options for ingesting higher quantities. Research has revealed more about how youth brains develop and how marijuana can affect the developing brain. All that tells us that for youth especially, Weed Can Wait. Parents can find more info at <http://www.starttalkingnow.org/>

## 10-30X STRONGER



Sources: Winters, K. C. & Lee, C. Y. S. Likelihood of developing an alcohol and cannabis use disorder during youth: Association with recent use and age. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence*. 2008; 92, 239-247.); [learnaboutmarijuanawa.org/Marijuana-Know-The-Facts.pdf](http://learnaboutmarijuanawa.org/Marijuana-Know-The-Facts.pdf) from WA State Cannabis and Liquor Control Board ; [learnaboutmarijuanawa.org/factsheets/potency.htm](http://learnaboutmarijuanawa.org/factsheets/potency.htm) from Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute at the University of WA

# RESOURCES

## **OAKLAND COMMUNITY HEALTH NETWORK**

(248) 858-1210 • oaklandchn.org

## **MENTAL HEALTH AND SUBSTANCE USE ACCESS SERVICES**

(248) 464-6363 • Non-emergency

## **COMMON GROUND**

Resource & Crisis Helpline • (800) 231-1127

## **THE PARTNERSHIP FOR DRUG-FREE KIDS**

drugfree.org

## **NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON DRUG ABUSE (NIDA)**

drugabuse.gov

## **TALK SOONER: HELPING PARENTS PREVENT YOUTH SUBSTANCE ABUSE**

talksooner.org/drugs/marijuana

## **NIDA FOR TEENS**

teens.drugabuse.gov

## **PREVENT COALITION**

youthnow.me/parents/cannabis-conversations

## **OPERATION PARENT**

operationparent.org



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(248) 221 -7101 • achcmi.org