

Keep Kids Top of Mind When It Comes to Marijuana

Colorado leads the way in thoughtful and pragmatic regulation of retail marijuana sales in part because industry, advocates, and lawmakers have consistently agreed on one thing: our kids deserve to be healthy and safe, so it is our collective responsibility to keep them out of harm's way when it comes to marijuana. Colorado does not significantly differ from the national average in lifetime, current (past 30 day), or early (before age 13) marijuana use. This is a testament to the policy framework our state set up early on to keep marijuana out of reach of our youngest and most vulnerable Coloradans.

- *With increased commercialization of retail marijuana, policymakers must continue to uphold the strong child-focused protections in current law and guard against any undoing of the progress we have made to ensure youth safety regarding marijuana legalization.*

Below are the guiding principles the Marijuana Public Health and Safety Network asks the legislature to keep top of mind in 2019:

1) Don't let marijuana policy get ahead of the science

As healthcare providers and public health advocates, we work tirelessly to improve the well-being of children, families, and residents across our great state. Science guides good public health policy, and doing right by kids and their families necessitates following the evidence. **The evidence surrounding marijuana exposure to the developing brain demonstrates that marijuana is harmful to attention, cognition, executive control, memory, problem-solving and more.**

As compassionate caregivers and child health advocates, we understand the challenges some families face in finding a treatment that works for their child with special healthcare needs. At the same time, we cannot in good faith advocate for medical marijuana as a viable treatment option for children and youth when there is no evidence to support its use.

- **Ensure treatments sought out by caring parents and guardians are backed by strong evidence, especially when they are categorized as "medical" interventions.**
- **Where evidence is currently lacking, we wholeheartedly support additional marijuana-related research, specifically focused on pediatric populations, to inform future policy initiatives and clinical treatments.**

2) Defend against the normalization of retail marijuana among Colorado youth

According to recent findings released by the National Institutes of Health from the annual Monitoring the Future survey of 8th, 10th and 12th graders in schools nationwide, marijuana vaping among high school seniors increased from 9.5% to 13.1% over the past year. Nationally, there continue to be more 12th graders who report using marijuana every day than smoking cigarettes (5.8% vs. 3.6%) and only 26.7% of 12th graders think regular marijuana use puts them at great risk of harm. The normalization of legalized retail marijuana for those with developing brains will likely only accelerate this trend, as experts agree that teen marijuana use tends to rise when the substance is easily available, socially acceptable, and perceived to be harmless.

Normalizing recreational consumption of marijuana poses certain health and safety risks to youth that could otherwise be avoided, from inhaling hazardous pollutants through secondhand marijuana smoke to decreased cognitive function. According to the 2017 Healthy Kids Colorado Survey, youth who thought regular marijuana use was risky were 76% less likely to use marijuana than those who did not. With rapid innovation and expansion among the industry in the type of product and method of consumption, greater

potency over time of THC (the psychoactive ingredient in marijuana), and obvious public consumption of marijuana, youth perceptions of the substance may change rapidly.

- Recognize that children and adolescents are shaped by their surroundings.
- Ensure that young people in communities across our state don't perceive marijuana as safe for youth to consume and that legislation does not contribute to marijuana normalization among youth.

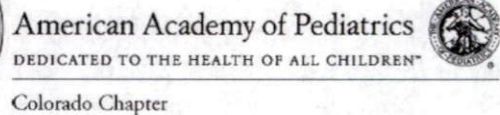
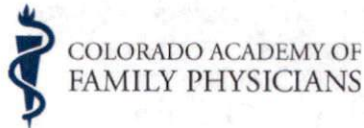
3) Protect the safety of Colorado kids from intentional and unintentional exposure to marijuana products

Our kids deserve protection from intentional and unintentional exposures from potentially harmful substances, including marijuana. When it comes to intentional use, according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, people who use marijuana before the age of 18 are four to seven times more likely to develop dependence than adults. This makes public health education, behavioral supports in schools and community-based settings, and substance use prevention strategies paramount to ensuring that all Colorado kids have a bright future ahead of them.

On the topic of unintentional ingestion, through its "Scientific Literature Review on Potential Health Effects of Marijuana Use," the Retail Marijuana Public Health Advisory Committee within the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment found substantial evidence of more unintentional child marijuana exposures happening in states with increased legal marijuana access, with the exposures potentially leading to significant clinical outcomes, including requiring hospitalization. Kids don't vote, so our coalition has and will continue to work with lawmakers, state agencies, public health advocates and others to advocate for crucial youth protections that must be preserved going forward.

- Uphold current law protections on safe storage, child-resistant packaging for products containing active THC, dosage limits, and other crucial youth protections.

**ON BEHALF OF THE MARIJUANA PUBLIC HEALTH AND SAFETY NETWORK,
THANK YOU IN ADVANCE FOR REMEMBERING OUR YOUNGEST
COLORADANS WHEN CONSIDERING MARIJUANA LEGISLATION THIS YEAR.**



**COLORADO CHILD & ADOLESCENT
PSYCHIATRIC SOCIETY (CCAPS)**

