



**DON'T LET FLORIDA  
GO TO POT**  
PRESERVE PARADISE

## **Grassroots Campaign Toolkit**

*Together, we can make a difference by educating individuals and communities about the harms associated with the legalization and commercialization of marijuana.*

# Table of Contents

<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>How to Communicate Effectively</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>One Pagers</b>	
<b>High Potency THC and Mental Health</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Marijuana Impaired Driving</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Impacts of Legalization</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Marijuana Myths and Facts</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Sample Media</b>	
<b>Social Media</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Press Release</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Op-Ed</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Letter to Editor</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>Resources</b>	<b>22</b>

Welcome to the Don't Let Florida Go to Pot: Preserve Paradise educational toolkit. This resource has been carefully crafted to empower you with the knowledge and tools needed to educate your community about the potential harms of marijuana legalization and commercialization. Our coalition is composed of diverse members, including substance abuse prevention professionals, healthcare experts, educators, law enforcement officers, and concerned citizens, all united by a common goal: to protect the health, safety, and well-being of Floridians.

### **Our Mission**

Our mission is to safeguard the health and prosperity of our state by preventing the negative consequences associated with marijuana legalization. We believe that informed communities are empowered communities, capable of making decisions that protect their well-being and preserve the unique beauty and quality of life in Florida.

### **Purpose of the Toolkit**

The purpose of this toolkit is to provide you with comprehensive, science-based information and practical resources that will help you:

- Educate your community about the health risks and societal impacts associated with increased access and availability of marijuana.
- Raise awareness about the increased risks of youth marijuana use and its implications for future generations.
- Inform the general public about the potential impacts to the workplace.
- Highlight the dangers of marijuana-impaired driving and promote safer roadways..
- Discuss the physical and mental health consequences of marijuana use.

### **How to Use the Toolkit**

This toolkit is designed to be user-friendly and easily accessible, providing a variety of materials that you can use in different settings and with diverse audiences. Here's a quick overview of what you'll find inside:

- **Fact Sheets:** Concise, informative documents that summarize key points on various topics related to marijuana use and its impacts.
- **Media Content:** Pre-written posts and graphics that you can share on your social media platforms to spread awareness and engage your audience along with sample Press Release, Opinion Editorial, and Letter-to-the-Editor.

Thank you for your commitment to this cause. Together, we can make a significant impact and ensure a brighter, healthier future for all Floridians. We encourage you to use this toolkit actively, share the information widely, and join us in our mission to preserve paradise.



# How to Communicate Effectively

## Best Practices to Engage with Various Audiences

Effective engagement with your community is crucial to spreading awareness about the potential harms of marijuana legalization and commercialization. Different audiences may require different approaches. Here are some best practices for engaging with various audiences.

1. Leverage Professional Networks:
  - Use professional associations and networks to disseminate information.
  - Offer to present at local meetings, conferences, seminars, and workshops.
2. Provide Evidence-Based Resources:
  - Share fact sheets, research studies, and infographics that highlight the latest findings on the impacts of marijuana.
  - Ensure all materials are backed by reputable sources.
3. Organize Training Sessions:
  - Conduct training sessions or webinars to educate prevention professionals on how to communicate the risks associated with marijuana use.
4. Facilitate Peer Discussions:
  - Create forums or discussion groups where professionals can share experiences, challenges, and strategies.
  - Encourage collaboration and the exchange of best practices.
5. Highlight Community Impact:
  - Use local data and case studies to illustrate the potential impact of marijuana legalization on their constituents.
  - Emphasize public health and safety concerns, as well as economic implications.
6. Utilize Multiple Channels:
  - Use a variety of channels to reach the general public, including social media, local media, community events, and educational workshops.
  - Tailor your message to fit each platform (e.g., short, engaging posts for social media, detailed articles for local newspapers).
7. Address Common Misconceptions:

- Identify and address common myths and misconceptions about marijuana use and legalization.
  - Provide clear, factual responses to these myths using reputable sources.
8. Share Personal Stories:
- Use personal stories and testimonials to illustrate the real-world impact of marijuana use.
  - Ensure these stories are authentic and resonate with your audience's values and concerns.
9. Offer Support and Resources:
- Provide information on where individuals can find help and support for marijuana-related issues.
  - Include resources such as helplines, support groups, and treatment centers.

## **Tips for Effective Communication**

- **Be Transparent and Honest:** Trust is crucial. Always provide accurate and honest information.
- **Listen Actively:** Engage in active listening to understand the concerns and perspectives of your audience.
- **Stay Respectful:** Respect differing opinions and foster a constructive dialogue.
- **Be Consistent:** Ensure your messaging is consistent across all platforms and materials.
- **Follow Up:** After events or discussions, follow up with additional information or resources to maintain engagement.

By tailoring your approach to each audience and utilizing these best practices, you can effectively raise awareness and educate your community about the potential harms of marijuana legalization and commercialization.

# RISING RISKS OF HIGH-POTENCY MARIJUANA: IMPACTS ON MENTAL HEALTH

This overview explores the relationship between high-potency marijuana and mental health, highlighting key findings and concerns from research studies.

## RISING POTENCY

The legalization of marijuana has led to a commercialized industry producing diverse marijuana products containing high concentrations of THC, the chemical that gets you high.<sup>1</sup> Before legalization, the average concentration of THC was low, only about 2-4%. Today, the average marijuana joint is ~600% stronger, containing 15-20% THC, while concentrated products like shatter, oil, dab, and edibles are extremely potent at over 90% THC.<sup>2</sup> Most research evaluating the impact of marijuana has been based on low-potency marijuana (containing less than 10% THC).<sup>3</sup>

## PSYCHOSIS AND SCHIZOPHRENIA

THC binds to areas in the brain involved in emotion, planning, problem-solving, memory, perception, and thought patterns, which significantly impacts mental health. Marijuana use can cause cannabis-induced psychosis with symptoms such as paranoia, hallucinations, and delusions. High potency marijuana can prolong these symptoms and lead to lasting mental health issues, increasing the risk of self-harm or harm to others.<sup>3</sup>

Hospitalizations for psychosis and marijuana use are more common in areas where marijuana is legalized.<sup>4</sup> A study done in various locations throughout Europe found that in places where high potency marijuana (10% THC or higher) is common, such as Amsterdam and London, 30% to 50% of new cases of psychosis could be prevented if high potency marijuana were not available.<sup>5</sup>

Psychotic disorders, like schizophrenia, make it hard to distinguish reality from inner thoughts, causing hallucinations, loss of motivation, trouble thinking clearly, strange or lack of feelings, trouble with communication, and sudden drop in grades or job performance among other behavioral signs.<sup>6</sup> Using marijuana every day triples the odds of developing a psychotic disorder, and using high-potency marijuana daily increases the odds nearly fivefold, compared to those who have never used it.<sup>5</sup>

For people with psychotic disorders, marijuana use can worsen outcomes, including longer hospitalizations, and increasing the risk of accidents, death, and psychotic symptoms.<sup>3</sup>

In individuals at risk of schizophrenia, heavy use of high-potency marijuana at a young age can worsen the illness by advancing the onset of the first psychotic break, by 2 to 6 years. This can significantly impact quality of life, leading to poor academic and social functioning.<sup>3</sup>

There is increasing evidence that having a cannabis use disorder (CUD), also known as marijuana addiction, is linked to schizophrenia, with this link potentially stronger for males. A huge study analyzing nearly 7 million people in Denmark found that 25 to 30% of schizophrenia cases in young males aged 21 to 30, could have been prevented if they did not have a cannabis use disorder.<sup>7</sup>

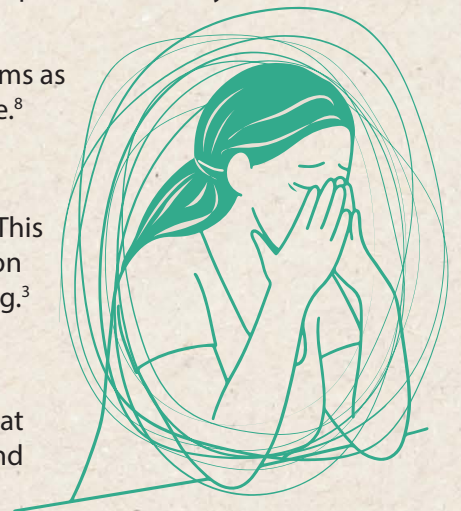
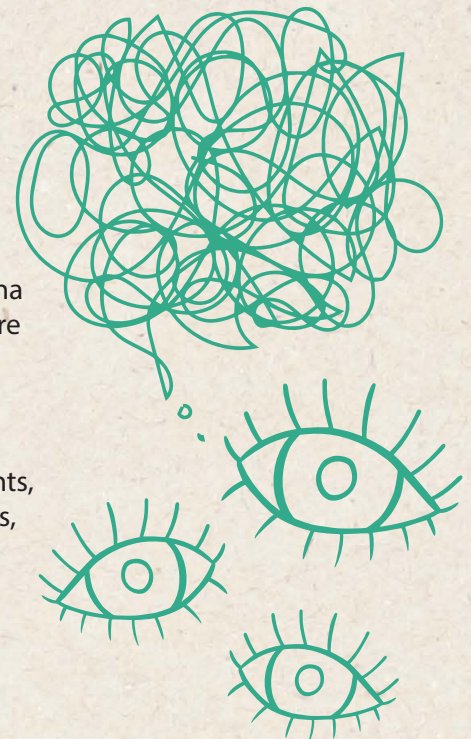
Using marijuana before the age of 15 is linked to experiencing more schizophrenia symptoms as a young adult, even after controlling for childhood psychotic symptoms and other drug use.<sup>8</sup>

## DEPRESSION AND ANXIETY

Numerous studies link marijuana use with increased levels of anxiety and mood disorders. This risk is higher for people who use at least weekly. A study examining patients with depression found that marijuana use worsened their depression, anxiety and mental health functioning.<sup>3</sup>

## PTSD & VETERANS

A study on over 2,000 veterans examining marijuana and PTSD symptom severity, found that marijuana use was associated with significantly worse PTSD symptoms, violent behavior, and increased alcohol and drug use.<sup>3</sup>



## SUICIDE

A large study including over 280,000 adults aged 18 to 34 found that marijuana use was linked with higher risks of having suicidal thoughts (suicidal ideation), making suicide plans, and attempting suicide, even if they didn't have depression.<sup>9</sup>

Regular marijuana use in people diagnosed with major depression, bipolar disorder, or schizophrenia increases the risk for suicide ideation, suicide attempts, and completed suicides.<sup>3</sup>

A study on over 3,300 Iraq/Afghanistan veterans found that cannabis use disorder was significantly associated with current suicide ideation and history of suicide attempts even after accounting for PTSD, depression, alcohol and other drug use disorder, history of childhood sexual abuse, and combat exposure.<sup>10</sup>

## ADDICTION

The number of adults with substance use disorders is on the rise, and the increasing access and availability of high potency products is likely to worsen this crisis.<sup>3</sup>

Frequent marijuana use can lead to dependency and cannabis use disorder (addiction).<sup>3</sup>

About 30% of people who use marijuana may have some form of cannabis use disorder and for those who use it daily, about 25 to 50% will become addicted.<sup>3</sup>



## IMPLICATIONS FOR TEENS AND YOUNG ADULTS

Teenagers and young adults are more likely to be negatively affected by marijuana use because their brains are rapidly developing and THC binds to areas in the brain undergoing development.<sup>1,3</sup> If marijuana is used during pregnancy, THC can travel through the placenta and bind to areas in the baby's brain which can cause structural and functional brain changes, leading to behavioral and mental health issues later in childhood.<sup>1,11</sup>

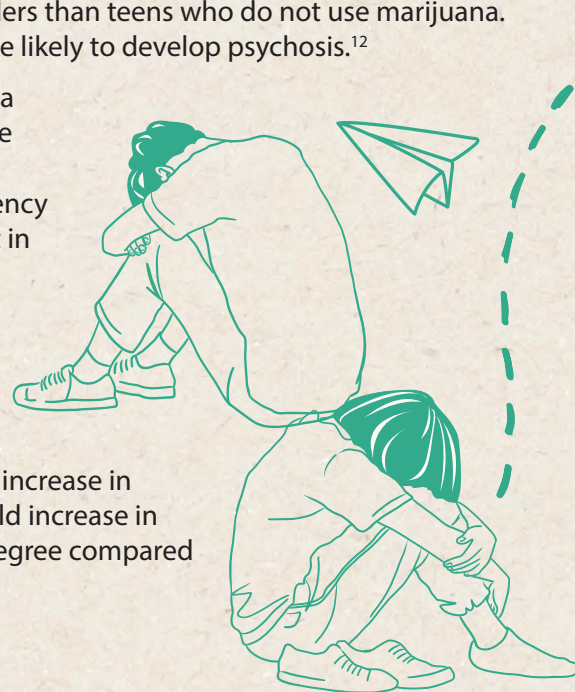
Teens who use marijuana are 2 to 4 times more likely to develop psychotic disorders than teens who do not use marijuana. Teens with a cannabis use disorder (marijuana addiction) are 3.5 to 4.5 times more likely to develop psychosis.<sup>12</sup>

A study analyzing health data found that teens aged 12 to 19 who used marijuana in the past year were 11 times more likely to develop a psychotic disorder at some point during their teenage years compared to teens who did not use marijuana. They also found that 5 in 6 teenagers who were hospitalized or visited an emergency department for a psychotic disorder had reported using marijuana at some point in their life.<sup>6</sup>

Using marijuana regularly during adolescence significantly increases the risk of developing generalized anxiety disorder and/or major depressive disorder as a young adult. Daily marijuana use by teens has been linked to nearly tripling the odds of developing an anxiety disorder in their late 20s.<sup>13</sup>

A large study found that daily marijuana use by age 17 linked to nearly an 18 fold increase in becoming dependent on marijuana, an 8 fold increase in using illicit drugs, a 7 fold increase in suicide attempts, and reduced odds of completing high school and attaining a degree compared to teens who never used marijuana.<sup>14</sup>

Data from Colorado finds marijuana the most detected substance in toxicology reports of youth ages 10 to 19 who died by suicide.<sup>15</sup>



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# MARIJUANA-IMPAIRED DRIVING

Driving under the influence of marijuana (DUI) is illegal and poses a significant public health concern.



Marijuana use is linked with an increased likelihood of car crashes, which are the second leading cause of unintentional injury-related deaths in the U.S. Marijuana affects movement, coordination, and thinking which impacts critical tasks required for safe driving such as:<sup>1,2,3,4</sup>

- Reaction time
- Road tracking
- Attention
- Executive functions

Marijuana-impaired driving is just as dangerous as drunk driving. After alcohol, marijuana is the most detected drug among drivers in motor vehicle accidents.<sup>5</sup>

- Drivers with a serum THC concentration of 1 ng/ml are just as likely to cause an accident as drivers with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.08%.<sup>6</sup>
- Drivers impaired by both marijuana and alcohol are 25 times more likely to cause a fatal crash than non-impaired drivers.<sup>7</sup>

Marijuana legalization has flooded the market with potent THC products like edibles, posing a significant risk for impaired driving and road safety.<sup>8</sup> Edibles pose a greater risk because:

- Our bodies take longer to process the drug, leading to delayed and prolonged effects. This can also lead to excessive consumption.<sup>9</sup>
- They may resemble common food items and other goods not typically associated with marijuana, such as baked goods, candies, gummies, oils, beverages, and various others. This has led to an increase in accidental ingestion of these products, including 4000 cases of children under the age of 9 hospitalized between 2017 and 2019.<sup>9</sup>

## THE NUMBER OF PEOPLE WHO DUI HAS INCREASED, LIKELY ATTRIBUTED TO CHANGING MARIJUANA POLICIES MISLEADING PEOPLE TO THINK MARIJUANA IS SAFE, ACCEPTABLE, AND LESS DANGEROUS THAN ALCOHOL.<sup>10</sup>

- Twelve million people aged 16 and older report driving under the influence of marijuana, with the highest prevalence among young adults aged 21 to 25 followed by youth aged 16 to 20.<sup>11</sup>
- In 2014, 3.2% of youth aged 16 to 25 drove under the influence of marijuana. By 2018, this increased to 9.2% among youth aged 16 to 20 and 12.4% among young adults aged 21 to 25.<sup>11</sup>
- The number of weekend nighttime drivers testing positive for THC increased 48% between 1999 and 2014.<sup>10</sup>
- Since 2002, fewer Americans perceive marijuana use is risky. A study analyzing national data found that between 2002 and 2014, the perception that marijuana was low-risk and easy to obtain increased by 86%, with further increases observed between 2015 and 2018. These findings align with the trend of increasing marijuana legalization across states.<sup>12</sup>
- In 2014 following marijuana legalization, Oregon saw a 163% increase of driving under the influence of intoxicants (DUI) arrests. In 2020, 63.4% of DUI arrests tested positive for marijuana.<sup>13</sup>

## DUI IS MORE COMMON THAN DRINKING AND DRIVING AMONG TEENS.<sup>14</sup>

More than 1 in 8 teen drivers report driving after using marijuana and about half of teen drivers who use marijuana drive after using it.<sup>14</sup>





# MARIJUANA-RELATED TRAFFIC CRASHES AND DEATHS

A 2024 study using the Fatality Analysis Reporting System (FARS), which tracks national vehicular fatal accidents, found that 33.4% of fatally injured drivers tested positive for marijuana. The FARS data also found fatalities increased:

- 38.2% in states with legalized recreational and medical marijuana,
- 32.8% in states with legalized medical use only, and
- 30.7% in states with no comprehensive legislation, meaning its use in any form is prohibited and penalized.<sup>15</sup>



Studies analyzing the impact of marijuana legalization and retail marijuana sales on traffic incidents found that:

- After marijuana was legalized and sold in stores, car accidents with injuries rose 5.8% and fatal crash rates increased 4.1%.<sup>16</sup>
- In Colorado, Washington, and Oregon, injury crash rates rose after legalization and again after retail sales began, with overall increases ranging from 8% to 18%.<sup>16</sup>
- Colorado saw a 138% increase in traffic fatalities with drivers testing positive after the legalization of recreational marijuana in 2013.<sup>17</sup>
- Between 2010 and 2021, emergency visits due to marijuana-related traffic incidents soared by 475% in Canada.<sup>18</sup>
  - 94% increase in 2018 following legalization, even while access was limited.<sup>17</sup>
  - 233% increase following widespread availability.<sup>18</sup>



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# IMPACTS OF LEGALIZATION

## INCREASED MARIJUANA USE

Recreational marijuana laws lead to increased new use and weekly usage among both youth and adults.<sup>1,2</sup>

The 2022 United Nation's World Drug Report stated that legalization of marijuana has led to a notable increase in use, especially among young adults, due to reduced perceived risk and stigma.<sup>3</sup>

States with recreational marijuana laws generally have higher rates of Cannabis Use Disorder (addiction to marijuana).<sup>4</sup>

## POTENCY

Marijuana potency has increased from an average of 4% in 1995 to over 15% today.<sup>5,6</sup>

In states with recreational marijuana laws, potency is much higher, ranging from around 16% THC (cannabis/marijuana flower) to 95% THC (concentrated products).<sup>7</sup>

New methods of processing marijuana have yielded extremely concentrated high potency extracts called wax, shatter, dabs, butane hash oil (BHO), or honey oil, with THC levels of up to 95%. These newer extracts are often used with vaporizers (vapes), especially by youth.<sup>8</sup>

## MARIJUANA/CANNABIS USE DISORDER (ADDICTION)

9% of people who try marijuana may become addicted at some point in their life.<sup>9</sup>

30% of marijuana users may develop some degree of Cannabis Use Disorder.<sup>10,11</sup>

## MENTAL HEALTH EFFECTS

Marijuana stimulates the brain, leading to altered thinking, memory issues, impaired brain development, hallucinations, and psychosis.<sup>12</sup>

Researchers find that any use of marijuana is associated with increased risk of self-reported psychotic disorders.<sup>13</sup>

Marijuana use is linked to poorer recovery outcomes for depression and anxiety symptoms, as well as mental health functioning.<sup>14</sup>

Marijuana use among adults 18-35 has been linked to higher rates of suicidal thoughts, planning, and attempts.<sup>15</sup>

## PHYSICAL HEALTH EFFECTS

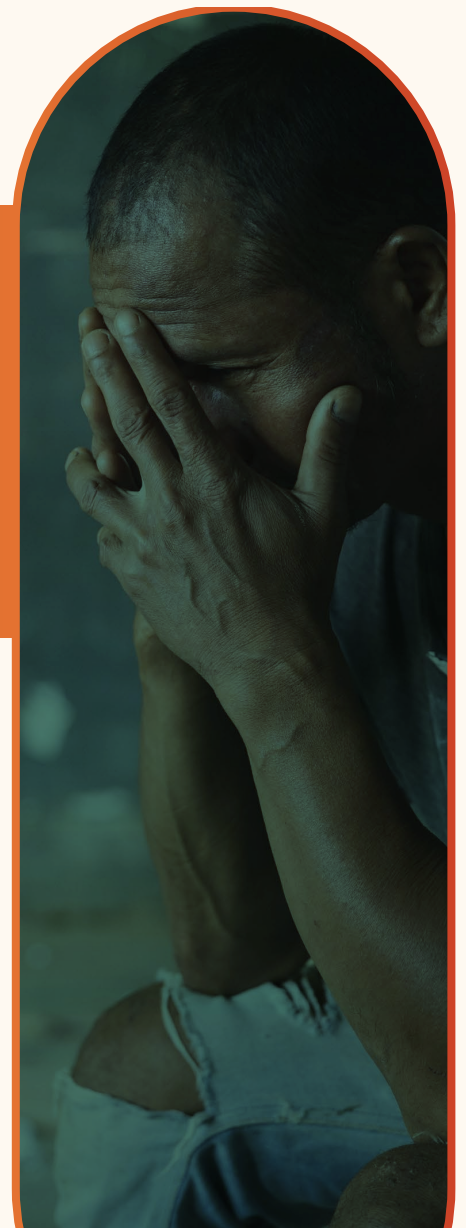
Like tobacco, marijuana smoke irritates the lungs causing breathing difficulties, chronic coughing, bronchitis, and pneumonia.<sup>16</sup>

Marijuana use nearly doubles the risk of testicular cancer.<sup>17</sup>

Regular, long-term marijuana use can lead to severe nausea, vomiting, and dehydration called Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome which may require medical attention.<sup>18</sup>

Since the legalization of recreational marijuana, Colorado has seen a significant rise in vomiting-related healthcare encounters.<sup>19,20</sup>

Emergency room visits and admissions related to marijuana abuse in California increased by 89% after recreational marijuana laws were enacted; marijuana-related hospitalizations in Colorado surged by 148%.<sup>21</sup>



## OTHER DRUG USE AND THE OPIOID CRISIS

Marijuana prepares the brain for heightened responses to other drugs, also causing vulnerability to other drug addictions.<sup>22,23</sup>

An estimated 44.7% of lifetime marijuana users also use other drugs.<sup>24</sup>

There is little evidence that marijuana reduces pain or the use of opioids.<sup>25</sup>

Marijuana use increases the likelihood of opioid dependence.<sup>26</sup>

People who used marijuana were more than three times as likely to use any opioid and more than twice as likely to have a prescription opioid use disorder or of abusing prescription opioids than nonusers.<sup>27</sup>

The legalization of marijuana appears to be linked to exacerbating the opioid crisis in the United States. By 2019, the death rates from all opioids and fentanyl were 44% and 50% higher, respectively, in areas where marijuana had been legalized compared to those where it had not.<sup>28</sup>



## MARIJUANA AND PREGNANCY

THC (the main psychoactive compound in marijuana) passes through the placenta during pregnancy and can be passed to the baby through breastmilk.<sup>29</sup>

Using marijuana during pregnancy can harm the baby, leading to issues such as low birth weight, developmental problems, and difficulties with attention and learning.<sup>30</sup>

Pregnant women who were heavy marijuana users had a much higher prevalence of poor medical and psychiatric outcomes compared to pregnant women who did not report such use.<sup>29</sup>

In Colorado, there was a more than two-fold increase in marijuana-involved pregnancy hospitalizations between 2011 and 2018. This increase was highest after the sale of recreational marijuana began in 2014.<sup>20</sup>

Even paternal marijuana use can have adverse effects on outcomes for babies.<sup>31</sup>

## ACCESS AND AVAILABILITY

“Big Marijuana” is a lucrative global industry that has followed the “Big Tobacco” playbook, by marketing their products to youth and downplaying harms.<sup>32</sup>

Marijuana is broadly available and cultivated in every U.S. state.<sup>33</sup>

Marijuana dispensary density has been linked to an increase in youth use.<sup>34</sup>

A study found that college students’ past 30-day use of marijuana escalated in states that had recreational marijuana legalization, compared to those in states that do not.<sup>35</sup>

## DRIVING

Legalization of the recreational use of marijuana was associated with a 6.5% increase in injury crash rates and a 2.3% increase in fatal crash rates.<sup>36</sup>

Since recreational marijuana was legalized in Colorado, traffic deaths involving drivers who tested positive for marijuana increased by 138% from 2013 to 2020, while all Colorado traffic deaths increased by 29%.<sup>32</sup>

More than five years after the legalization of recreational marijuana in Washington, fatal-crash-involved drivers who are THC-positive are about double the level observed before legalization.<sup>37</sup>



## IMPACT ON YOUTH

90% of all addictions start in adolescence.<sup>38</sup>

People who begin using marijuana before the age of 18 are four to seven times more likely to develop Cannabis Use Disorder (addiction).<sup>39</sup>

Marijuana use is consistently associated with reduced educational attainment (e.g. grades and graduating) and increased school absences and dropouts.<sup>40</sup>

Chronic marijuana use results in impaired learning in adolescents and is linked to declines in IQ (8-10 points on average), school performance, and life satisfaction.<sup>38</sup>

About 31% of high school seniors used marijuana in the past year.<sup>41</sup>

In states that have legalized marijuana, there was a 25% increase in risk for Cannabis Use Disorder among youth aged 12 to 17 years.<sup>4</sup>

## CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

Legalization increases unintentional pediatric marijuana exposure, leading to poisonings in children.<sup>42</sup>

From 2017 to 2021, there was a 1,375% increase in cases of marijuana edible poisonings among children under the age of 6.<sup>43</sup>

In Washington, hospitalizations for unintentional pediatric marijuana exposure (for kids under 9) increased after legalization, with 81% occurring within a 2.5-year period after the legalization of recreational marijuana. Over 80% of exposures occurred within the home.<sup>44</sup>

## WORKPLACE

States with recreational marijuana laws saw a 10% increase in workplace injuries among individuals aged 20 to 34 years.<sup>45</sup>

Approximately 1/3 of employees have observed usage of marijuana during work hours.<sup>46</sup>

Many states have changed their laws regarding pre-hire testing for marijuana and its components, so it is likely that more people are working while using the drug. Around half of companies that eliminated THC testing report an increase in incidents or other workplace performance concerns.<sup>47</sup>

## ENVIRONMENT

Devastating environmental impacts from marijuana cultivation include: endangering native animals and their habitats, toxic waste run-off, deforestation, noise and light pollution, diversion of water resources, human waste and garbage littering.<sup>48</sup>

Marijuana cultivation uses a large amount of critical resources. In California, cultivation accounts for over \$5 billion worth of electricity usage annually.<sup>49</sup>

Marijuana plants use an average of 227 liters per plant per day.<sup>50</sup>





# DON'T BE FOOLED BY POT INDUSTRY PROMISES

## MARIJUANA MYTHS AND FACTS

### MYTH: MARIJUANA IS GOOD FOR MENTAL HEALTH

#### FACT

Marijuana can cause psychosis, schizophrenia, anxiety, and depression. It is linked closely with suicide, and is a major risk factor for mental illness. (*DiForti et al., 2019; Hjorthøj et al., 2021; Henquet et al., 2005; Marconi et al., 2016; Mustonen et al., 2018; Niemi-Pynttari et al., 2013*)

### MYTH: MARIJUANA IS NOT ADDICTIVE.

#### FACT

Marijuana is addictive. Hundreds of thousands of Americans seek treatment for marijuana every year.

Peer-reviewed research has determined that between 21 and 30% of users have a marijuana use disorder. (*NIDA, 2019a*) If a user is below the age of 18, they are SEVEN TIMES more likely to develop a marijuana use disorder. (*NIDA, 2019a*)

More teens seek treatment for marijuana addiction than seek treatment for any other drug. (*SAMHSA, 2022*)

### MYTH: MARIJUANA IS MEDICINE.

#### FACT

No major medical association supports marijuana as medicine. Marijuana is made of hundreds of components and does not meet FDA standards for safe and effective medicine. (*AMA, 2015; NAS, 2020*)

### MYTH: IF WE LEGALIZE MARIJUANA, USE WILL BE LIMITED TO ADULTS.

#### FACT

States that have legal marijuana have seen an exploding illicit market and increasing rates of youth drug use. In states that have legalized "adult use" marijuana, 12–17-year-olds have experienced a 25% increase in marijuana use disorder compared to non-legal states.

(*Cerda et.al, 2020*)

### MYTH: TODAY'S MARIJUANA IS THE SAME AS IT WAS IN THE 1970'S.

#### FACT

Marijuana potency has increased significantly and rapidly. Marijuana in the 1970s had an average of 2% THC (the psychoactive component in marijuana), but today average potency ranges from 18-35% and products as high as 99% are produced and sold by the industry.

High potency products are more addictive and result in worse health outcomes for users, especially teens and young adults.

### MYTH: MARIJUANA IS A TREATMENT FOR PAIN AND COULD HELP SOLVE THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC.

#### FACT

Marijuana not only fails to mitigate pain but results in lower pain thresholds. (*American Society of Anesthesiologists, 2021*)

Marijuana legalization is associated with MORE OPIOID USE and FATALITIES. Lifetime use of marijuana is the #1 risk factor for opioid misuse. (*CDC, 2020*)

### MYTH: MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION DOES NOT IMPACT ROAD SAFETY.

#### FACT

Marijuana has been implicated in 25 PERCENT OF ROAD DEATHS in Colorado. (*CO Division of Criminal Justice, 2020*)

### MYTH: LEGALIZING MARIJUANA WILL ELIMINATE THE ILLICIT MARKET FOR MARIJUANA.

#### FACT

No state has eliminated or even reduced the illicit market.

Between 70-80% of marijuana sold in California legal pot shops was produced and grown illegally. (*NBC News, 2022*)

**MYTH: MARIJUANA USE IS NOT DANGEROUS TO PHYSICAL OR MENTAL HEALTH AND INCIDENTS OF NEGATIVE HEALTH OUTCOMES ARE RARE.**

**FACT** At least 56 scientific studies have confirmed the link between high-potency marijuana and psychosis. (*van der Steur, Batalla, Bossong, 2020*)

Multiple scientific studies have now also linked THC to IQ Loss, psychosis, schizophrenia, depression and suicidality.

Marijuana users are 25% more likely to need emergency care and hospitalization. (*Vozoris et al., 2022*) Between 2011 and 2021, marijuana-related emergency department visits increased by 77% to over 800,000 ED visits. (*DAWN, 2011&2021*)

Among teenagers in Colorado, emergency department visits were 71% for psychiatric events. (*Dr. Ken Finn, 2019*)

**MYTH: MARIJUANA WILL GENERATE A WINDFALL OF TAX REVENUE.**

**FACT** Marijuana accounts for less than 1% of state budgets in states that have legalized, and no state has made the money that advocates project.

A Colorado study found that for every \$1 in marijuana tax revenue, the state spends \$4.50 offsetting the costs of legalization (*CCU, 2017*).

Tax revenue as a percentage of state budgets for FY 21-22:

- Colorado – 0.09%
- Alaska – 0.29%
- Oregon – 0.3%
- California – 0.49%

**MYTH: MOST PEOPLE SUPPORT LEGALIZATION.**

**FACT** Between 60 and 71% of localities in California, Colorado, New York, and New Jersey have voted to “opt-out” of commercial marijuana sales. (*Nieves, 2021; Fuego, 2019; Rockefeller Institute of Government, 2022; MJBizDaily, 2021*)

**MYTH: MARIJUANA DOESN'T HARM THE ENVIRONMENT.**

**FACT** Marijuana is an environmental blight that consumes massive amounts of energy, pollutes the air and water supply, results in land cover changes, and uses harmful pesticides. Marijuana production is nearly **FOUR TIMES** more energy intensive than coal or oil production. (*Reitz, 2015*)

It takes more water to grow marijuana than any other conventional crop, including wheat and rice. Indoor marijuana grows emit as much CO2 as 3.3 million cars. (*Larkin & Sweeney, 2022*)

**MYTH: MARIJUANA IS NOT AS HARMFUL FOR YOUNG PEOPLE AND CAN HELP MENTAL HEALTH.**

**FACT** Research shows that marijuana use changes the structure of the brain and heavy, lifelong use can result in IQ loss. (*Hill & Hsu, 2022*) In Colorado, marijuana is the number one substance found in youth suicide toxicology reports. (*Roberts, 2019*)

**MYTH: MARIJUANA CAN HELP ALLEVIATE MORNING SICKNESS SYMPTOMS IN PREGNANT WOMEN.**

**FACT** Smoking marijuana during pregnancy increases problems with neurological development in newborns, especially in motivation, learning, memory, and movement. (*Madras, 2016*) THC exposure in utero compromises brain function and IQ in young children.

Marijuana use among MEN may double the risk of partner miscarriage—regardless of the woman’s use. (*McAlpine, 2019*)

**SAM** Smart Approaches to Marijuana  
preventing another big tobacco  
[www.learnaboutsam.org](http://www.learnaboutsam.org)

# Sample Media

## Sample Social Media Posts

### General Awareness

"Did you know high potency THC products can lead to increased addiction and mental health issues? #PreserveParadise #DontLetFloridaGoToPot "

"Legalizing marijuana can result in higher rates of youth usage. Protect our kids by staying informed. #DontLetFloridaGoToPot"

"Marijuana-impaired driving is a real danger on our roads. #DriveSober #DontLetFloridaGoToPot"

"Marijuana use can negatively affect academic performance. #EducationFirst #HealthyYouth"

"The commercialization of marijuana targets vulnerable populations. #PublicHealth #DontLetFloridaGoToPot"

### Health Impacts

"Marijuana use can lead to serious physical health issues, including respiratory problems and cardiovascular risks. #HealthyLiving #DontLetFloridaGoToPot"

"Mental health matters! High potency marijuana can increase the risk of anxiety, depression, and psychosis. #MentalHealthAwareness #DontLetFloridaGoToPot"

"Did you know marijuana use can worsen symptoms of mental health disorders? #MentalHealthMatters #DontLetFloridaGoToPot"

### Youth and Education

"Youth marijuana use can have lasting impacts on brain development. #YouthHealth #DontLetFloridaGoToPot"

"Students who use marijuana may experience lower academic achievement. #EducationFirst #PreserveParadise"

### Workplace Safety

"Marijuana impairment in the workplace can lead to accidents and reduced productivity. #WorkplaceSafety #DontLetFloridaGoToPot"





"Marijuana use can impair decision-making and motor skills, leading to workplace hazards. Learn more at [website link]. #SafetyFirst #PreserveParadise"

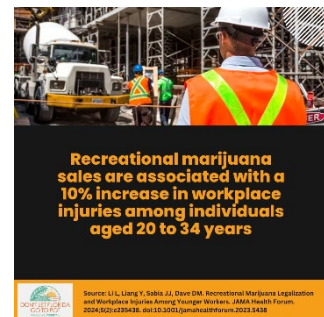
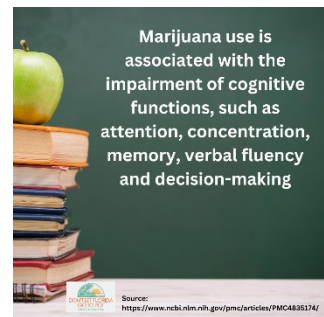
### Community and Family Impact

"Marijuana use can increase the risk of child abuse. #FamilySafety #DontLetFloridaGoToPot"

"Marijuana use affects more than just the individual—it impacts families and communities. #CommunitySupport #DontLetFloridaGoToPot"




### Social Media Graphics

Download the full suite of 49 graphics [here](#).



### Social Media Follow

Follow the Don't Let Florida Got to Pot social media pages and share the content to expand the campaign's reach.

-  <https://x.com/dontletFLgo2pot>
-  <https://www.instagram.com/dontletFLgo2pot>
-  <https://www.facebook.com/profile.php?id=61561458173208>

# Sample Press Release

## NEWS

**For more information contact:**

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Organization/Community]

[Phone Number]

[Email Address]

### **Florida Community Leader Urges Caution in Considering Recreational Marijuana Legalization**

[City/Town], [Date] **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE** — As Florida contemplates the legalization of recreational marijuana, community leaders are calling for careful consideration of the potential risks highlighted by experiences in other states.

The allure of increased tax revenue and the promise of regulated markets must not overshadow the profound risks associated with widespread marijuana use, warns [Community Leader's Name], [Title] of [Organization/Community]. According to [him/her], "The evidence from other states is clear: legalization often leads to a surge in marijuana consumption, particularly among young adults. This surge is accompanied by higher rates of Cannabis Use Disorder and increased public health concerns."

Recent reports, including the United Nations' World Drug Report, have underscored a significant increase in marijuana use following legalization, fueled by reduced perceived risks and stigma. Moreover, today's marijuana products are notably more potent, with some containing up to 95% THC. Concentrated forms such as wax and shatter, which are popular among youth, pose severe health risks including psychosis and impaired brain development.

(more)



"Marijuana's impact on mental health is profound," [Community Leader's Name] added. "Studies have linked its use to higher risks of psychotic disorders, worsened outcomes for depression and anxiety, and increased rates of suicidal tendencies among young adults."

Contrary to popular belief, legalized marijuana has not alleviated crime. States like Colorado and Washington have experienced spikes in violent crime and intimate partner violence post-legalization. Additionally, marijuana-impaired driving has contributed to a rise in traffic fatalities, with THC-positive drivers involved in fatal crashes more than doubling in certain areas.

"The impact on our youth cannot be overstated," emphasized [Community Leader's Name]. "Adolescents exposed to marijuana are at greater risk of addiction, educational setbacks, and accidental poisoning incidents."

Furthermore, the environmental toll of marijuana cultivation is severe, involving deforestation, toxic waste runoff, and excessive water consumption. The persistence of the black market despite legalization efforts exacerbates these environmental and regulatory challenges.

"While the potential economic benefits through taxation may seem appealing, Florida must prioritize public health and safety," [Community Leader's Name] continued. "We must proceed with prudence, focusing on comprehensive public health education, stringent regulatory frameworks, and safeguarding the well-being of all Floridians, especially our youth."

In conclusion, [Community Leader's Name] emphasized that "the legalization of recreational marijuana in Florida should not proceed without careful consideration of these significant risks and challenges. As responsible stewards of public health and safety, we must learn from the experiences of other states and proceed with caution. Our communities and future generations depend on informed, deliberate action rather than hasty decisions driven solely by economic incentives."

###

# Sample Op-Ed

**(Op-Ed)**

## **Florida Must Heed the Warnings Against Legalizing Recreational Marijuana**

**By:**

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Organization/Community]

[Phone Number]

[Email Address]

The United Nations' World Drug Report underscores a troubling trend: legalization leads to a surge in marijuana consumption, particularly among young adults. This uptick, driven by diminished perceived risks, has serious implications. States with recreational marijuana laws have reported higher rates of Cannabis Use Disorder, highlighting the addictive nature of the drug.

Moreover, today's marijuana is not the same as it once was. The potency of THC has soared to unprecedented levels, with some products containing up to 95% THC. Concentrated forms like wax and shatter pose severe health risks, including psychosis and impaired brain development. Equally concerning is the similarity between marijuana smoke and tobacco in terms of lung damage and increased risks of conditions like bronchitis and even testicular cancer.

The impact on mental health is equally profound. Studies have linked marijuana use to heightened risks of psychotic disorders, worsened outcomes for depression and anxiety, and increased rates of suicidal tendencies among young adults. For adolescents, prolonged use correlates with diminished IQ, educational setbacks, and a greater likelihood of lifelong Cannabis Use Disorder.

Contrary to expectations, legalized marijuana has not curbed crime. States such as Colorado and Washington witnessed spikes in violent crime and intimate partner violence following legalization. Additionally, marijuana-impaired driving has contributed to a rise in traffic fatalities, with THC-positive drivers involved in fatal crashes more than doubling in some areas.

The consequences for youth are particularly troubling. Adolescents exposed to marijuana are more susceptible to addiction, educational setbacks, and accidental poisonings. Post-legalization, incidents of pediatric marijuana exposure have surged, posing significant risks to children's health.

Beyond public health concerns, the environmental impact of marijuana cultivation is severe, involving deforestation, toxic waste runoff, and excessive water use. Furthermore, the persistence of the black market undermines regulatory efforts, perpetuating criminal activities and complicating law enforcement.

While the promise of increased tax revenue may seem appealing, Florida must consider the broader implications of legalization. Increased availability invariably leads to higher consumption rates, exacerbating health crises, straining public resources, and compromising public safety. Any move towards legalization demands prudence, with a focus on comprehensive public health education, stringent regulatory frameworks, and safeguarding the well-being of all Floridians, particularly our youth.

As responsible stewards of public health and safety, we cannot afford to overlook the lessons learned from other states. Florida must proceed with caution, prioritizing informed decision-making over economic incentives alone. The future of our communities and the well-being of future generations hinge on thoughtful, deliberate action. Let us learn from the experiences of others and navigate this issue with the utmost care and consideration.

As Florida debates the prospect of legalizing recreational marijuana, it is imperative to reflect on the cautionary tales from other states that have ventured down this path. While proponents tout economic benefits and regulatory control, the adverse effects of widespread marijuana use cannot be ignored.

# Sample Letter to the Editor

## The Hidden Dangers of Legalized Recreational Marijuana in Florida

Dear Editor:

As Florida contemplates the legalization of recreational marijuana, it's crucial to scrutinize the alarming trends and consequences experienced in other states that have already taken this path. The allure of increased tax revenue and the promise of regulated markets must not overshadow the profound risks associated with widespread marijuana use.

The legalization of recreational marijuana invariably leads to a surge in its consumption, especially among young adults. The United Nations' World Drug Report highlights a significant uptick in marijuana use following legalization, fueled by reduced perceived risks and stigma. This spike is not without consequence—states with recreational laws report higher rates of Cannabis Use Disorder, underscoring the addictive potential of this drug.

Today's marijuana is not the same as it was decades ago. The potency of THC (the psychoactive component) has skyrocketed, with some products containing up to 95% THC. Concentrated forms like wax and shatter, popular among youth, pose severe health risks, including psychosis and impaired brain development. Moreover, marijuana smoke, akin to tobacco, damages lungs and escalates risks of conditions like bronchitis and even testicular cancer.

Marijuana's impact on mental health is profound and concerning. Studies link its use to increased risks of psychotic disorders, worsened outcomes for depression and anxiety, and higher rates of suicidal tendencies among young adults. Prolonged use during adolescence correlates with diminished IQ, educational setbacks, and a higher likelihood of developing lifelong Cannabis Use Disorder.

Contrary to popular belief, legalized marijuana has not alleviated crime. Instead, states like Colorado and Washington witnessed spikes in violent crime and intimate partner violence following legalization. Furthermore, marijuana-impaired driving has led to a rise in traffic fatalities, with THC-positive drivers involved in fatal crashes more than doubling in some areas.

The impact on youth cannot be overstated. Adolescents exposed to marijuana are more likely to develop addiction, experience educational setbacks, and suffer from accidental poisoning. Pediatric marijuana exposure incidents have surged dramatically post-legalization, posing significant risks to children's health and safety.

Beyond health and safety, the environmental toll of marijuana cultivation is severe, with widespread deforestation, toxic waste runoff, and excessive water consumption. Additionally, the persistence of the black market, despite legalization efforts, perpetuates criminal activities and undermines regulatory efforts.

The allure of economic gains through taxation might seem enticing, Florida must consider the broader implications of legalizing recreational marijuana. The evidence is clear: increased availability leads to higher consumption rates, exacerbating health crises, straining public resources, and compromising public safety. The path forward demands prudence, focusing on comprehensive public health education, robust regulatory frameworks, and prioritizing the well-being of all Floridians, especially our youth.

Legalization of recreational marijuana in Florida should not proceed without careful consideration of these significant risks and challenges. As responsible stewards of public health and safety, we must learn from the experiences of other states and proceed with caution. The well-being of our communities and future generations hinges on informed, deliberate action rather than hasty decisions driven by economic incentives alone.

Sincerely,

[Your Name]

[Your Title]

[Organization/Community]

[Phone Number]

[Email Address]

# Resources

<p><b>Basic Facts</b></p>	<p><b><u>NIDA</u> (National Institute on Drug Abuse)</b></p> <p><b><u>DEA</u> (Drug Enforcement Administration)</b></p> <p><b><u>CDC</u> (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention)</b></p>
<p><b>Legal Status in U.S.</b></p>	<p><b><u>NCSL</u> (National Conference of State Legislatures)</b></p>
<p><b>Marijuana Effects</b></p>	<p><b><u>SAMHSA</u> (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)</b></p> <p><b><u>IASIC</u> (International Academy on the Science &amp; Impact of Cannabis)</b></p> <p><b><u>NHTSA</u> (Marijuana &amp; Driving)</b></p> <p><b><u>DFAF</u> (Marijuana &amp; Pregnancy)</b></p> <p><b><u>Johnny’s Ambassador’s</u> (Marijuana &amp; Teens)</b></p> <p><b><u>Delta 8</u></b></p>
<p><b>Efforts</b></p>	<p><b><u>Drug Free America Foundation</u> (Resources)</b></p> <p><b><u>SAM</u> (Smart Approaches to Marijuana)</b></p> <p><b><u>AALM</u> (Americans against Legalizing Marijuana)</b></p> <p><b><u>Every Brain Matters</u></b></p>
<p><b>Treatment</b></p>	<p><b><u>National Helpline 1-800-662-HELP (4357)</u> or <u>FindTreatment.gov</u></b></p> <p><b><u>Mar-Anon Family Groups</u> (Support &amp; Hope for Those Affected by Another’s Marijuana Use)</b></p>