

TIPS FOR YOUTH-SERVING PROFESSIONALS

May 21, 2015

Prevention information for educators, administrators and other youth-serving professionals.

WHAT STEPS CAN PREVENT YOUTH USE OF AND ACCESS TO MARIJUANA?

REVIEW AND ALIGN POLICIES

The Tobacco Free Schools law (C.R.S. 25-14-103.5) requires that school districts **prohibit marijuana use on school property**.

This promotes a safe environment that helps students make healthy choices and protects them from secondhand smoke.

STRENGTHEN POLICIES AND PROGRAMS

- ➔ **Ban possession** of all marijuana products in addition to marijuana use.
- ➔ **Include consequences for violations.** Promote alternatives to suspension that improve educational outcomes, like restorative justice approaches or in-school suspension.
- ➔ **Define smoking** in your policy to include vaping and electronic smoking devices.
- ➔ **Promote evidence-based substance abuse prevention curricula** or programs available in resources section. Engage youth to help select the program.

All youth-serving organizations are encouraged to adopt similar policies and programs that promote healthy environments.

RESOURCES FOR YOUTH-SERVING PROFESSIONALS

For more information on marijuana in Colorado, including methods of use and health risks, visit Colorado.gov/Marijuana.

POLICY AND PROGRAM SUPPORT

For school district policy support and evidence-based health education curricula for marijuana prevention, visit bit.ly/RMC_MJ.

For instructional units and evidence-based programs that prevent or reduce youth marijuana use, visit bit.ly/students_mj.

CONCERNS ABOUT YOUTH USING MARIJUANA

For specific tips on age-appropriate ways to talk to youth, suggested talking points and how to spot high-risk behavior, visit SpeakNowColorado.org.

For more information on the laws and consequences for youth marijuana use, visit bit.ly/CDE_under21penalties.

To access Colorado substance abuse treatment professionals, visit LinkingCare.org.

TALK TO YOUTH ABOUT MARIJUANA TO HELP THEM BETTER UNDERSTAND THE RISKS

Listen carefully and stay positive. Keep the conversation open so they can come to you with questions. Knowing they can ask you questions helps youth make good decisions for their future.

What you talk about may depend on how old they are.

MARIJUANA DAMAGES THEIR GROWING BRAINS

- Marijuana can make it harder to learn, sometimes weeks after quitting.
- Problems with learning increase as more marijuana is used.
- Youth who start using marijuana are more likely to become addicted in the future.

Encourage youth to protect their brains by not using marijuana.

MARIJUANA CAN GET IN THE WAY OF THEIR GOALS

- Ask about their dreams and help them connect with what they need to achieve their goals.
- Be honest. Explain how doing well in school and staying out of trouble can help them reach their goals.

MARIJUANA CAN GET THEM IN TROUBLE

- **Breaking family and community rules:** Set clear rules for youth. Share that younger siblings and neighbors see them as role models, so they should not use marijuana.
- **Breaking school or after school activity rules:** Youth may be referred for drug counseling, suspended, expelled or face prosecution.
- **Breaking Colorado laws:** Youth may get a Minor in Possession charge. This can lead to fines, public service, substance abuse education, loss of a driver's license and misdemeanor or felony charges.
- **Breaking federal laws:** Since marijuana is still illegal outside Colorado, youth with marijuana charges may not get financial aid to help pay for college.

TALK TO PARENTS

Encourage them to be good role models and to talk with youth about the risks of using marijuana.

Visit Colorado.gov/Marijuana for parent-specific resources.

CONCERNED ABOUT PARENTS USING MARIJUANA?

Talk to them about your concerns. Remind them to provide a safe, smoke-free environment and to store marijuana in a locked area that children cannot see or reach.

If you are unsure if marijuana use is a concern for the welfare of a child, contact your local Department of Human Services.

If you suspect child abuse or neglect (i.e. that the health or welfare of a child is threatened), report your concerns to the Colorado Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline: 1-844-CO-4-KIDS.

You can learn more about the signs of child abuse and neglect from the Colorado Department of Human Services.

For Colorado mandatory reporter trainings, visit coloradocwts.com/community-training.

