

DRUG POLICY TASK FORCE
RECOMMENDATION PRESENTED TO THE
COLORADO COMMISSION ON CRIMINAL AND JUVENILE JUSTICE
November 8, 2013

FY14-DP #3 Funding for public education, prevention and treatment as these pertain to marijuana use.

Recommendation FY14-DP #3:

The General Assembly should allocate resources from the marijuana cash fund (created in C.R.S. 12-43.3-501) toward the Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Fund (C.R.S. 25-1.5-111) for the purposes of public education and prevention efforts focused on discouraging youth access.

Discussion:

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, research from different areas is converging on the fact that regular marijuana use by young people can have long-lasting negative impact on the structure and function of the brain. A recent study of marijuana users who began using in adolescence revealed a profound deficit in connections between brain areas responsible for learning and memory. Importantly, the lost cognitive abilities were not restored in those who quit smoking marijuana as adults. (Individuals who started smoking marijuana in adulthood did not show significant IQ declines.) Further, NIDA estimates that about nine percent of users become addicted to marijuana, and this number increases to 17 percent among those who start young. Finally, the annual NIDA-supported *Monitoring the Future* survey of adolescent drug use and attitudes has detected, over the past several years, increasing use of marijuana by teens associated with a decreasing perception of marijuana's harmfulness.¹

While regulations promulgated by the Colorado Department of Revenue are intended to protect youth access and consumption of marijuana, there is a critical need for public education and prevention efforts targeting adolescent marijuana use. The state's Office of Behavioral Health manages the Adolescent Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Fund and has the capacity to develop evidence-based prevention programs provided that resources are available.

¹ See <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/marijuana>.