

Drug Free Marion County

Marijuana Position Statement

Background:

 Marijuana has been decriminalized in recent years. This decriminalization has affected both today’s cultural norms and the structure of its legal system. Marijuana has worked its way into pop culture as many people enjoy the high attained. There are advertisements on multiple social media platforms of various products that are made to improve users' experience. Furthermore, users on those platforms opt to be a part of said advertisements. Also, across the country many states have chosen to legalize medicinal, or both medicinal and recreational use of marijuana. Altogether there are 37 states who legalized medicinal/medicinal and recreational use of marijuana which includes Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan. This shows a trend that marijuana will soon be legalized around the country and Marion County has already taken a step in that direction by deeming the possession of less than an ounce of marijuana as legal.

Purpose:

 DFMC and our Local Coordinating Council Marion County Prevention Alliance seeks to prevent marijuana use for anyone who is under the age of 25. This is due to the negative impact marijuana has on the development of anyone who is under the age of 25. This prevention goes for both medicinal and recreational use for anyone who is under the age of 25. Furthermore, this includes the various forms of THC and marijuana-based products such as edibles, liquid THC, and etc. DFMC and our Local Coordinating Council Marion County Prevention Alliance also aims to educate the community about the various forms of marijuana that are accessible to those who would be considered underaged users.

DFMC and our Local Coordinating Council Marion County Prevention Alliance Position: Marijuana should be inaccessible to anyone who is under the age of 25

Reasoning:

Harms Brain Development

* Marijuana negatively impacts the academic success of users who are still in school. This is due to the mental side effects of marijuana which includes a reduced ability to pay attention, difficulty in remembering information, and an impaired ability to learn, etc. These side effects last up to days after the initial effects wear off.
	+ A New Zealand study conducted in part by Duke University Researchers showed that people who started smoking marijuana heavily in their teens and had an ongoing youth disorder lost on average 8 IQ points between ages 13-38. Furthermore, there have been studies conducted in Australia and New Zealand that showed teens who use marijuana regularly were significantly less likely to graduate high school or obtain a college degree
	+ The prefrontal cortex is one of the last parts of the brain to develop as it continues to develop well into a person’s 20s. Thus, a person's teenage years is a very vulnerable time to anything that interrupts said development process. There have been brain imaging studies showing that people who started using marijuana regularly before the age of 16 have less developed white matter.

Could cause or add to Psychological/ Mental Health Problems

* Marijuana use can lead to dependence, or marijuana use disorder. Moreover, it has been linked to mental health issues within teens such as depression and anxiety. Increased anxiety, paranoia, and hallucinations are also side effects of the drug. In cases in which a high dosage of marijuana is used, a psychotic reaction could occur. Marijuana usage has also been linked to increased chances of committing suicide.
	+ Recent Researchers have found that smoking a high potency of marijuana everyday could increase your chances to develop psychosis nearly five times in comparison to people who do not smoke marijuana.
	+ A 15 year follow up of an adult community sample of 1920 participants in the United States showed that use of cannabis increased the risk of major depression at follow up fourfold. Also, the use of cannabis was specifically associated with an increase in suicidal ideation and anhedonia.
	+ Similar findings in an Australian study reported in this issue show a dose-effect relation between the use of cannabis and anxiety or depression in a large cohort of 14–15-year-olds followed for seven years. This is reflected in higher rates of anxiety or depression according to the frequency with which cannabis was used.

Other

* Marijuana can cause grouchiness, sleeplessness, cravings, or a decrease in appetite
* It also has physical side effects such as causing breathing problems, an increased heart rate, and intense nausea and vomiting.
* Marijuana has been linked to lower income, criminal behavior, unemployment, greater welfare dependence and lower satisfaction

Conclusion

 Marijuana has been legalized in many states and may work its way into becoming legal within the state of Indiana. However, Drug Free Marion County and our Local Coordinating Council Marion County Prevention Alliance feels that those who are under the age of 25 should not be permitted to use marijuana under any circumstance. Drug Free Marion County and our Local Coordinating Council Marion County Prevention Alliance believes that marijuana sales should be treated in a similar way that both tobacco and alcohol sales are in this aspect.

 Drug Free Marion County and our Local Coordinating Council Marion County Prevention Alliance feels that it is too much of a risk for those underage of 25 to have access to marijuana in any form. We recognize that there are some medical benefits to marijuana, but those medical benefits do not outweigh the potential harm that could be done from using marijuana.