



## **Marijuana Priority Paper** **Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention**

### **Overview**

In multiple U.S. States, Marijuana (also called cannabis) has been decriminalized for medicinal and recreational (non-medical) use, but remains illegal under federal law. In the State of Wisconsin, the Wisconsin Justice Initiative has requested Wisconsin county boards to place an advisory referendum on the ballots in November in order to gauge their constituents' views on decriminalizing marijuana for medicinal and recreational purposes. At the local level, the Eau Claire County Board voted to place this item as a referendum question to appear on the November 6th General Election ballot.

The Alliance for Substance Abuse Prevention is committed to working with partners to apply a public health lens to this issue; protect the public from unintended consequences; inform the public about the information we have; and prevent negative health impacts, particularly on youth. Our shared priorities regarding marijuana decriminalization include the following:

### **Detail: Three key priorities**

#### **1. Broaden the evidence base**

Historically, marijuana impact studies have been limited in scope and based on cannabis material with lower potency than many of the products currently available on the market. There is an urgent need to expand the evidence base related to the health and social impacts of marijuana, including developing an adequate system to collect data and identify trends.

We support efforts to:

- Continue research on health effects
- Monitor negative health risks, particularly related to high potency products
- Expand the evidence base related to medicinal use and claims of positive health effects
- Evaluate the effectiveness of regulatory frameworks and traditional prevention practices

#### **2. Prevent youth access and use**

Research shows that marijuana use can have long-term effects on the developing brain when use begins in adolescence, especially with regular or heavy use. Marijuana use at an early age can affect memory, school performance, attention, and learning, and can increase risk for mental health problems. According to the Centers for Disease Control, 1 in 10 marijuana users will become addicted, and for people who begin using before the age of 18, that number rises to 1 in 6.

We support efforts to:

- Promote access to and awareness of education resources for youth and for people of all ages
- Ensure that educational information is relevant, accurate and accessible to the community
- Reduce youth access to and appeal of marijuana

### **3. Protect people from injury and death**

Marijuana impacts the skills required for safe driving and increases the risk of injury, death and crashes. Unintentional ingestion of edible marijuana products with high concentrations of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) are also a growing risk.

We support efforts to:

- Increase awareness of health risks of using marijuana
- Increase awareness of risk of using marijuana and driving and/or riding with an impaired driver
- Promote safe storage, childproof packaging and warning labels for marijuana products
- Ensure clear consumer information on THC content per serving for products, including edibles

### **Conclusion**

Our mission is to protect and improve the health and well-being of all people in Eau Claire County and to provide equitable opportunities for people to be happy, self-reliant and connected to community. The proposed decriminalization of marijuana presents a complex set of emerging risks and challenges to achieving these goals. In this environment, we will: evaluate proposed state and local policy proposals based on the priorities outlined in this statement; request funding to prevent youth access and use; and work with community partners to promote healthy communities for all.

### **Key Resources/Links**

[Marijuana Fast Facts and Fact Sheets, CDC](#)

[The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado](#)

[Marijuana in Wisconsin](#)

[Lessons Learned from Marijuana Legalization in Washington State](#)

[Assessment of the Potential Impact of Regulated Marijuana in New York State](#)

[Marijuana Bills Increasingly Focus on Social Justice](#)

[Monitoring Health Concerns Related to Marijuana in Colorado: 2016](#)

[Proposed legislation in NY: Peoples-Stokes](#)