



### I21 Potential Effects of Legalized Recreational Cannabis on Youth

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After attending this presentation, attendees will appreciate the growing national trend toward legalization of recreational cannabis and understand the potential effects that acceptance of cannabis use and the growing cannabis industry may have on the vulnerable population of children and adolescents.

This presentation will impact the forensic science community by increasing awareness of the specific vulnerabilities of children and youths to cannabis products that are transforming due to a changing legal stance toward recreational use. Clinicians will be more aware of changes in Tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) concentration, means of consumption, and packaging that potentially have an impact of pediatric use of cannabis. Clinicians may be better able to counsel their patients on marijuana use and preventing inadvertent consumption of cannabis products by children.

Currently, recreational cannabis for adults is legal in eight states and the District of Columbia, and the list is growing.<sup>1</sup> This presentation explores current trends in legalization of recreational cannabis, the growing cannabis industry, and changes in THC potency and means of consuming that have resulted from this legal shift; however, a recent report by Han et al. examining data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health from 2002-2014 found that youth cannabis use has been declining since 2011.<sup>2,3</sup> This data is in contradiction to what might be expected with increasing acceptance of cannabis use.

As more states begin to legalize recreational marijuana, it remains to be seen if this downward trend in youth cannabis use will continue. This presentation will examine how some of the marketing efforts of the cannabis industry for new forms of cannabis, such as edibles, are being packaged to appear nearly indistinguishable from candy products and may target children or be mistakenly consumed by children. The current trend of legalizing recreational marijuana use may have an adverse effect on the vulnerable youth population. The potential effects of the higher visibility of cannabis products, as well as higher potency products, is also explored in the context of research that suggests that younger populations may be more vulnerable to cognitive impairment and more susceptible to developing psychosis with cannabis use.<sup>4</sup>

#### Reference(s):

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3. Han B., Compton W.M., Jones C.M., Blanco C. Cannabis use and cannabis use disorders among youth in the United States, 2002-2014. *Journal of Clinical Psychiatry*. (2017): e1-e10.
4. Volkow N.D., Baler R.D., Compton W.M., Weiss S.R.B. Adverse health effects of marijuana use. *The New England Journal of Medicine*. 370 (2014): 2219-2227.

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#### Cannabis, Legalization, Adolescents