

13<sup>TH</sup> EDITION

# Cannabis and the Responsible Parent

RECIPIENT  
OF THE NATIONAL  
INSTITUTE OF DRUG  
ABUSE PACESETTER  
AWARD

ADULT-LEGAL CANNABIS—WHAT IT MEANS TO YOUTH



*There was no awkward meeting; we just talked in the car and after dinner my kids thanked me!*



**Environmental Resource Council, Inc.**

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# Cannabis and the Responsible Parent

Adult-Legal Cannabis—What it Means to Youth

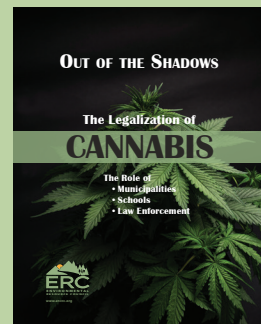
by Bruce Bomier, MPH, Board Chair  
The Environmental Resource Council

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For more in-depth information regarding health and safety of cannabis use and descriptions of the history and policy of regulation please download our *Out of the Shadows* document. With rapid changes in the civics of regulation and especially health and safety findings we frequently update the *Out of the Shadows* document.

Scan to download our free guide of detailed information on cannabis health and safety, other aspects of cannabis use, history and civics are also discussed or visit our website at [ENVRC.org](http://ENVRC.org).



This book supports the best asset young people have—caring parents—by describing cannabis and risks and effectively communicating those risks.

Now, as legalization of both therapeutic and recreational use for adults becomes a reality, the situation changes... but not the fundamental protective relationship between parents and their children.

*A nonprofit organization – all book proceeds are used to support our charitable projects.*

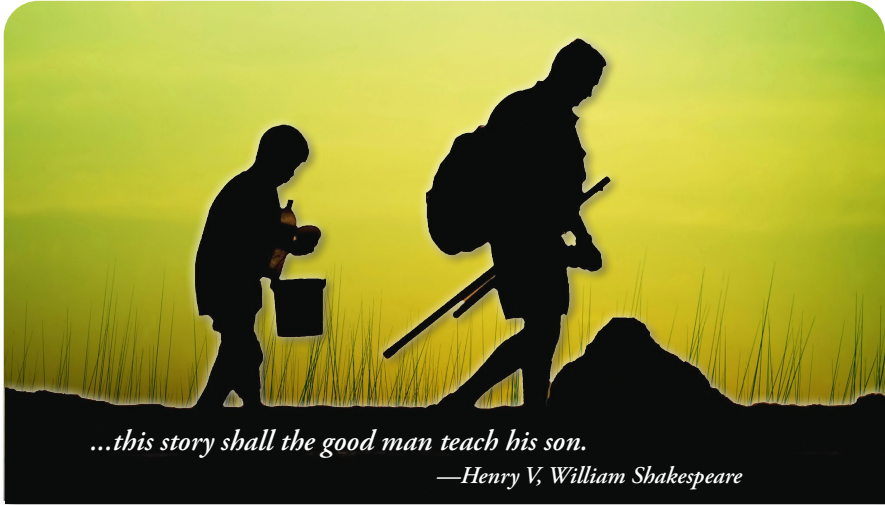
*Visit our website for additional information on cannabis and other public health and policy material ([envrc.org](http://envrc.org)).*



#### **About the Author**

Bruce Bomier, MPH, Board Chair  
The Environmental Resource Council

He has published extensively on environment and health issues and provided programing on public radio and public television.



*...this story shall the good man teach his son.*

*—Henry V, William Shakespeare*

*Dealing with cannabis within one's family is a challenging journey. Over the last 25 years previous editions of this book have helped parents connect and protect. With adult legalization the message changes a bit and in a way, becomes more critical.*

## Introduction

Cannabis has a long history as a textile, a medicine, and most of all, as a way to get high. Risk to youth has always been a primary concern.

With the transition from criminal to legalized control for adult distribution youth access decrease if local distribution is well managed. If poorly managed, youth access and risk remains or may increase. Parental capacity to protect is unchanged. It's still the dominant factor in use and misuse.

As Bill Bryson wrote in *The Body – A Guide for Occupants*

**“...the sensations you feel as a teenager are more intense than at any other time of life. ...seeking pleasure is an occupational hazard for teenagers.”**

Like alcohol, tobacco, or driving a car, cannabis use among young people represents a risk greater than for adults. As children shift into adolescence and a magical array of new behavioral options and sensations are awakened an awareness of and exposure to cannabis will be part of their world. Risk is real and serious.

As a parent or guardian you are in position to protect. No drug speech by a police officer can approach your influence. No counselor has the human touch of a caring family.

You have the power to safeguard your children, but you require three things.

1. **Resolve** – You probably already have it—you’re reading this—but you also have to be committed to learning valid information about cannabis and then focus on how to effectively share that understanding.
2. **Accurate Information** – There is an ocean of inaccurate pro- and anti-cannabis information. This noise confuses adults, let alone young people. You need reality. A sensible discussion of the use and risk of cannabis follows.
3. **Style** – Each family operates uniquely. No one can tell you exactly how to connect with your children, especially about something this personal. We can share what other parents have said about cannabis and how their children felt about what was said, or not said, but that’s not sufficient. This is one challenge you have to work through as a family. We can give you a map of the terrain but not GPS coordinates. In the end, as a family, you must find your own path.

## Remembering

When you were young, you or people you knew, likely used cannabis. Some may have done dumb and or dangerous things and were damaged. However, it’s likely most were essentially unscathed.

Teachers, your faith community, the media, friends, or others may have directly or indirectly provided bad or quality advice and sent subtle signals about cannabis. It’s probable you received warnings that seemed (and may have been) absurd or hopefully were wise. Some messages likely promoted using cannabis. You were searching for direction in living in your new body in a new world.

At some level making life decisions was confusing as a new brilliant, colorful, semi-adult world was rolled out before you. Remembering what it was like for you then is fundamental in connecting with your children now regarding behavior and consequences.

# You Rule

Before there were federal, local government, or school “programs,” there were mothers and fathers who guided their children by lamplight, candlelight, or campfire. This fundamental human relationship is alive and well, and it’s the best chance for your son or daughter to make it in a complicated world.



The Partnership for a Drug-Free America once surveyed 10,000 teens in an effort to understand what concerned them about drug use. It wasn’t risk of arrest or health problems—what most deeply troubled them was “disappointing their mothers and fathers.”

When it seems that you’re no longer one of the three most important things in your child’s life (friends, friends, and friends), look deeper. You may have to work harder to get something across and prove to them that you know what you’re talking about, but *you’re still the one*.

**“Many adolescents are very skillful in conveying the message that what parents say is irrelevant. As parents, our mistake is to believe them.”**

**—Michael Resnick**

One of the easiest ways to talk yourself out of taking on “the cannabis responsibility” is to leave it to the police, the school, the county, the faith community, the internet—in other words, to assume that “the village” has it under control. It doesn’t. “The village” is one confused place when it comes to cannabis, but understanding how it approaches cannabis is important.

# “The Village” and Cannabis

*It takes a village to raise a child.*

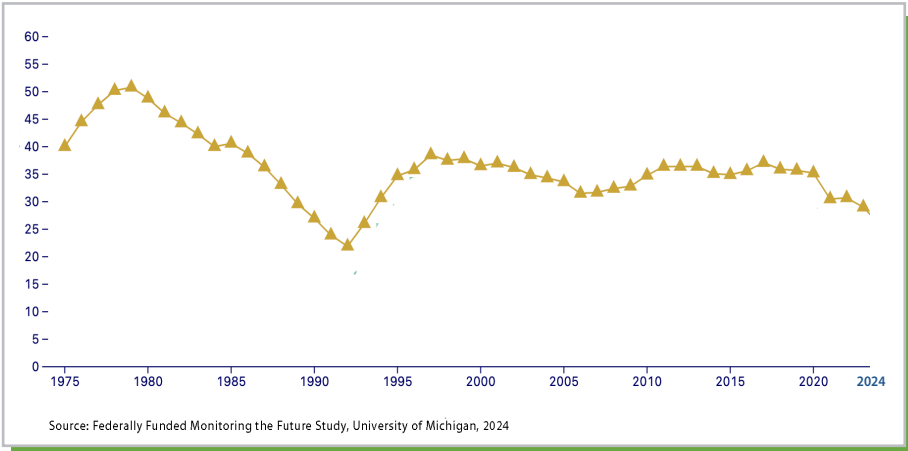
—African proverb often quoted by the late Maya Angelou

That proverb might be true, but when it comes to cannabis, it is not a good thing.

The village can't be trusted as a guide. Your children more likely will need protection from the village or at least guidance on how it can be safely navigated. Let's first try to understand who in the village uses marijuana.

A lot of people try marijuana. Over the last decade, the number of high school seniors who have said they tried cannabis has ranged around 40 percent. Note the word, “tried.” If we were to ask you if you drive at dangerous speeds, you would probably say “no.” But if we asked if you have ever broken the speed limit, you would likely say “yes.” Big difference!

Marijuana (Cannabis):  
Trend in 12 month Prevalence of Use High School Seniors





Three-quarters of high school students disapprove of “regular” cannabis use. This is important! As with alcohol or tobacco, how often and how much of a drug a person uses relates directly to risk. “Trying” cannabis is different in the minds of young people from regular or certainly heavy use and, in fact, there really is a difference. **Most young people disapprove of “regular use.”**

As children get older, more try cannabis and more use it regularly. It was that way when use levels were higher and when they were lower, and it’s that way now. As young people get older, more and more try cannabis. By age 19, a solid majority of Americans report cannabis use. Interestingly, over the last decade, the use of most other illegal drugs has steadily declined.\*

Use rates don’t fluctuate much across the country. Whether in a small town or inner city, rural area or suburb, patterns of use are about the same. There is no way to relocate to some safe, drug-free village. Where adult use has been legalized often adult use increases while adolescent use decreases. There are exceptions depending on how state and local governments manage legal dispensaries.

You cannot count on the police or the schools to immunize your children against cannabis exposure. Wise law enforcement professionals and school leaders look to parents to take the lead.



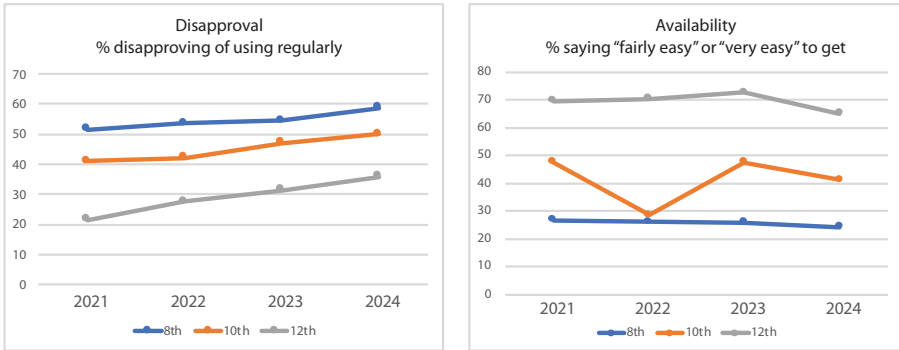
A field of cannabis growing behind a suburban middle school.

Cannabis was always available, no matter how hard the authorities tried to stamp it out. From ages 12–17, cannabis was two to four times easier to buy than beer. Unlike alcohol or virtually any other intoxicant, anyone can put a relatively easy to obtain cannabis seed in the ground and grow a plant. If a young person could plant a beer can and grow a beer tree, then more beer would likely be available to underage, would-be beer drinkers.

\*One exception to the reduction in use of illicit drugs, other than cannabis, is the **adult** use of opiates typically fentanyl. While around 50 percent of American young adults have tried cannabis, only one quarter of one percent seem to have used fentanyl.

Legalization of medical use or adult recreational use in some states may or may not increase availability. Adult legalization, with the proper controls, will reduce youth access, but again that depends upon adult legalization guidelines and enforcement and integrity of distributors.

### Cannabis: Trends in Disapproval and Availability for Grades 8, 10 and 12



Source: Monitoring the Future Study, the University of Michigan, 2024

A truly powerful influence in a teen’s life is the “electronic village.” Messages from radio, TV, music, and movies can be irrationally pro- or anti-cannabis. You can tune into a TV sitcom or U-Tube blurb that presents cannabis use as common and cute. Then there might be an anti-drug public service message one remote button over. On radio, TV, on the internet slightly cryptic rock and rap lyrics that celebrate getting stoned might be bracketed by messages demonizing drug use, or by an interview with an exasperated critic or proponent of adult legalization.

Of course, the most powerful, as well as the most schizophrenic resident of the electronic village is the internet. This free-for-all way of communicating provides easy access to a disorganized smorgasbord of weird ideas, valuable or erratic insights, and wild exaggerations. When we last selected the word “marijuana (cannabis)” on our search engines, there were over 10 million postings, most of which paint the drug in a generally friendly light. We finally found some sound, health-based information, but alongside it was someone’s frantic description of cannabis a “satanic,” and someone else selling cannabis T-shirts.

Before your teen can find rational information on cannabis over the internet, they will likely find other descriptions of it as harmless or good for them, or be pitched often dangerous mail-order cannabis. They may find some anti-cannabis information so irrational and out-of-touch that they will disregard legitimate warnings.



So, movies, the Scout troop, the grandparent, the teacher, the pastor, the blog, the police officer, the municipal swimming pool, the congregation, TV, radio, and social media, especially the internet, are residents

of your teen’s 21st Century “village.” You simply can’t rely on any part of that village to wisely guide your children about cannabis.

It has always been primarily up to you anyway, and that’s okay.

Let’s discuss your responsibility and then review a reasonable description of the nature cannabis, including risks for young people.

**“Good parents can trump bad neighborhoods.”**

**—Joseph P. Shapiro**

# *It Starts With...* Connecting

As you likely know, it takes courage and style to talk with your children about sensitive issues.

You've been teaching your children about life in quiet ways since their eyes first focused on you. Remember your surprise when they knew you were worried about a friend's health or were mad at a neighbor? Or that they seemed to know when there were money problems before they knew exactly what money was? They see small things and hear quiet voices, and their attention has been riveted on you for years.



When you showed disgust at a drunken uncle or smiled at a “dope” joke on “The Tonight Show,” you were teaching your children. If you voted for a politician who admitted using marijuana or other illegal drugs in their past (like several recent presidents), you were showing them that you felt there were reasons other than cannabis use to trust a leader.

You've likely indicated to your children in subtle ways how you feel about intoxication in general and probably even cannabis. They have something of a fix on what you think is important, right, wrong, or dangerous about drugs and getting intoxicated.

Directly discussing cannabis is one way to bring it all together, blending in realistic information about cannabis and leaving no room for doubt or confusion about your values and concerns. You've telegraphed your core values to your children already, so you're not starting from scratch. The way you approach this issue relates to your unique relationship with your children.

To be effective, you'll have to get across that you're being as honest as you can, that you know what you're talking about and especially that you want to know and care about what they think. If it's going to work, the discussion needs to be open, thought out, and absolutely go deeper than, "As long as you're under my roof..." or "just say no."

Before any discussion, be clear in your mind how you want them to view cannabis or perhaps any form of intoxication. Based on your life experience and other information (hopefully, the information we will provide), you should have a good idea about what a young person confronting cannabis use in our society should know about risk. Once you realize what's important to you and what you think is valuable to get across to your children...**stop**.

## It's time to take a deep breath and reflect.

Sit back, close your eyes, and remember when you were a young adult. Dust off the feelings as well as the memories. Remember the sense of frustration at being half adult and half child. Remember the passion. Remember what it meant to finally get the use of a car for an evening, and the world it opened up. Remember the tiny blemish on your face that seemed like a volcano, or what a glance from someone special meant. The stars were brighter and the music more profound, and though you tried, it was getting harder to automatically accept your parents' values when a fascinating, fresh new world was being rolled out in front of you. The years of love and reliance on your family wouldn't wash away, but if they—your parents—had something they wanted to get across, it would have to cut it in your new, enchanting world.

Of course, now "they" are you.



# In Their Minds

For 20 some years courts and schools sent young people, found in possession of cannabis, to evening drug education programs we held. We both shared health information and listened to them. One quiet evening, in a meeting with a group of post-high school students, all of whom had used cannabis, we asked if or how their parents had talked with them about marijuana. Some of what several shared might provide insight.



**SHE HAD A CHILDHOOD** she described as “absolutely middle class.” She felt she had led a protected suburban life with loving parents in a good community. Her first brief cannabis use encounter occurred at an overnight church retreat in the 9th grade, well before her parents talked to her and her older sister about “marijuana.” When she was in the 11th grade, her mother quoted from an anti-marijuana article while her father sat nearby and said nothing. Her mother showed photos of a “stoned” mother monkey dropping her baby, and of what were described as mutated cells with “broken chromosomes,” both identified as resulting from cannabis use. This student didn’t think the article was credible but she may have taken it seriously at the time. She clearly remembered the article. A few years later, when talking with her father alone one evening after watching a TV program, she described the cannabis use of one of her friends. He cleared his throat and softly began to talk about marijuana and alcohol use in a personal and moving way. Years

later, she could recall exactly what her father said and could even describe what he was wearing. She was deeply moved by that evening’s conversation. The father had described his own use of marijuana as a soldier and then as a student at a vocational school. He described doing some stupid things, which she would not repeat to the group because “they were personal.” He had also talked a lot about his brother, a recovering alcoholic. The father saw the damage of alcoholism as similar to chronic cannabis use, and now, so did his daughter. After many years, this sophisticated college senior was still affected by what her father had said that night and she took his warnings to heart. She had tried cannabis in social settings, both before and after her parents talked with her, but our impression is that her parents’ concern and her father’s honest warnings about abuse made an impression. She looked upon intoxication in general with suspicion and saw cannabis use as something to be approached with caution if at all.

**HE WAS A TALL, QUIET** student, with long, clean hair and a small tattoo on his lower neck. He was confident that he'd be successful. His father, he said, had just simply told him "not to use drugs," and neither he nor his parents had ever discussed cannabis directly. The student felt that his father probably had used cannabis and that his mother probably had not, but it was just a feeling. His father had joked about someone "being on silly weed," but all in all, cannabis did not appear to be a big deal to his parents. The student generally used cannabis monthly, a little more often in the summer. He told us that in his freshman year his roommate had used almost daily and still maintained great grades. He also

knew "burnouts" that had zeroed out their lives, so he knew there were serious risks with using "a lot" of cannabis. Warnings about risks associated with vaping cannabis had been posted on the internet, which he believed. He said he may or may not continue light use after college, but he had no intention of discussing use with his parents, especially his father. He felt that his father would feel "obliged" to get mad if he told him about his use. The student considered much of the "drug scare" material he had been given at school to be silly. He was generally undecided as to the role cannabis or alcohol would play in his life, and it was clear his parents wouldn't have much to do with any decision about his use.

**SHE WAS ALL BUSINESS** — an organized college sophomore who had her life planned down to laundry hour. She was focused on "winning a good job." Her mother was single and without a high school degree and held a tough, somewhat degrading job. Her daughter was proud of how hard her mother worked. The student seemed to sense that her mother really was counting on her to come through and succeed. Her mother had talked long and openly about bad decisions she had made as a drug-using "flower child." Discussions about cannabis included lists of mistakes made with friends, sexual partners, alcohol, education, and the law. The student had tried cannabis several times but had not used for over a year. She was certain cannabis would never become a serious part of her life. Beyond feeling that cannabis could be a waste of time, disappointing her mother was a risk this student wouldn't take.

## Your Approach

For better or worse, the values and feelings of parents powerfully influence how teens perceive cannabis. Where parents seemed unclear, so were the teens. Where parents honestly saw risk, especially in underage use, and seemed to know what they were talking about, their children folded those warnings into their lives. It wasn't as though the children were responding to specific directions or accepting everything at face value—it was more like an appreciation for their parents' concern, and respect for their insights made a difference.

If discussions you have with your children are going to make an impression, they will follow the style

of your own family and won't be pulled from this or any other reading or expert. You laugh together a certain way, you handle problems a certain way, you react to the world around you in ways different from any other family. If you approach it thoughtfully you'll find the right way to get your message across.

The following is some advice we think may be of value.

### **Avoid a Scare Tactic Focus**

Don't try to create fear with half-truths. They will know or hear about healthy and successful people who use or have used. Creating fear through misstatements may work for a while if your children are young, but that approach likely will be discounted eventually and legitimate warnings about the risks more likely to be shrugged off. The initial discounting of legitimate warnings regarding illegal vaping products and contaminated cannabis is an example. In states that have legalized distribution, there have been well documented product recalls. Risk should not be overstated but is real, especially in states that do not legally regulate.

### **Listen Carefully**

Any good conversation goes two ways. Your children, will have ideas and feelings about cannabis. Another student's recent cannabis arrest, the local "burnout" (compulsive cannabis user), famous personalities who flaunt use, or even the wisdom of cannabis laws, are topics they've probably discussed with friends. If you talk openly and listen closely, the discussion will reach a point where you both can focus on realistic risks. You need to know where they stand, and vice versa. Then you go forward together.



### **Be Cautious About Confronting Their Use**

Think hard before confronting your child regarding their use. The wisdom of asking if they have used depends on how your family works. It would seem to us that you would want to avoid putting them in a place where they won't talk with you at all or, worse,



where they are pressured to lie to please you. If they volunteer they have or have not used, that's important. If they have used, remember, while any underage use represents risk, there is a big difference in risk from heavy use and having tried it once or twice.

### Do Not Try To Talk While They are High

Don't try to deal with anything important with anyone who's intoxicated. Unfortunately, this is often when emotional discussion happens. Be sure they are safe and then wait until the high fades. It will typically be a matter of a couple of hours if it was smoked and a bit longer if it was ingested. Then it is really the time to talk.

### Be Sensitive if They Have Used

It is probably wrong to react as though your child's use is a family betrayal. Young people trying cannabis, though potentially dangerous, is simply not unusual. Saying you're disappointed and concerned is natural and honest – it would seem strange if a parent would not react with concern – but what's important is to get across why underage use is dangerous and why you're worried.

### Don't Argue

Throwing data, research findings, and philosophies at each other will likely back both of you into a corner. Perspective comes hard when you're stuck in a corner, and insights always blur as conflict heats up. It is also difficult to listen if you're both focused on lining up your next verbal shot. If on the other hand, one person (perhaps you) is seriously listening and trying to understand, it will be harder for the other to not listen.

### Don't Take Responsibility for the Status Quo

You are not personally responsible for drug laws or for the way society deals with cannabis. You didn't write our laws or create public attitudes about cannabis or other drugs. **You and your children have to live in reality, and the reality is that cannabis use is illegal for minors.** Focus on what threatens them, physically, socially, and **legally**.

### Don't Focus Your Discussion on "Rating" Drugs

Don't get tangled up in comparing the risks of different drugs. Cannabis is

fundamentally different from coffee, alcohol, cocaine, opiates, tobacco, or any other drug. Trying to evaluate completely different things on some sort of scale can lead to confusion. Comparisons to different intoxicants may be helpful but should not be overly emphasized. A realistic discussion of cannabis-specific health and safety issues is in the next section along with references and easy access to more detailed health information.

### **Don't Get into Cannabis "Cloth" or "Medicine"**

One strain of cannabis plant fibers typically referred to as "hemp" can be used to make cloth or rope. Oils from the plant can also serve as an ingredient in soaps or moisturizers. Many nations, including Germany and Canada, allow and even encourage growing hemp as a commodity crop. Until cannabis was scheduled as an illicit drug, many American farmers (including George Washington) grew hemp commercially. It was always understood to be mildly intoxicating. There is a renewed focus today on growing cannabis strains for use as a textile and a source of essential oils. Certain strains with limited intoxication properties are now grown for fiber in America. All of this may be of interest but has little or nothing to do with the risks of using cannabis as a recreational drug.

Cannabis has medicinal properties and may be available by prescription, most often as a muscle relaxant, pain, or anti-nausea drug. Most Americans live in states that have established systems for prescribing medical cannabis, typically through licensed dispensaries. There are also compounds similar to cannabis that can be medically prescribed. CBD or "cannabidiol," is a lipid or oil that has only trace amounts of intoxicating properties. It is sold with few restrictions as a muscle relaxant or general quasi-health enhancer.

The fact you can make jeans or medicine out of the plant has no realistic connection to getting high for enjoyment. Don't get sidetracked. No state has yet or is likely to ever allow legal recreational use of cannabis by minors because of well-accepted risks to young people.

### **Discussing Your Personal Use**

If you have used cannabis or been around those who used, whether or not to discuss your personal experiences can be a tough call. This cloud can, unfortunately, keep parents from dealing with the issue. In the end, you

must know that your child's love for you and sense of your worth will not be based upon whether or not you have used cannabis or were around people who did. In other words, don't get the idea that your past disqualifies you from giving sound counsel to your children.

It is wrong to lie about your use. You can't avoid looking like a hypocrite by becoming one. Misleading your children about your personal use is a shaky foundation for honest discussion. The only options are telling the truth or avoiding the issue.

The same eyes that saw and understood so much in early childhood probably accurately sense your beliefs, your history, and your character. They absolutely know you're human. The simple act of honestly talking about your life in an effort to protect them will say volumes.

You may have known people whose lives and health were compromised by use of intoxicating drugs, most likely alcohol and possibly cannabis. You also have likely known those who have used cannabis and are successful and fulfilled. You almost certainly have some important life experience and insights to share regarding the nature of intoxication.

Putting your experience and values into a genuine discussion with your children is a responsible, compassionate, and powerful action. Among young people with whom we've talked, these sorts of conversations with parents are the absolutely dominant factor in how they approach cannabis use.

# Health and Safety

In many states new cannabis taxation revenues are designated for schools, local police and fire departments, and both state and local transportation departments. A priority has involved public health warnings and especially outreach aimed at youth.

Some research has indicated that depriving cannabis related cash flow into criminal organizations results in progressive reductions in property crime often involving youth.

Within most states there are five changes in the legalization of adult cannabis:

## 1. Perception of Risk

It is probable that many will perceive cannabis use as inherently “safer.” It becomes critical that, especially for young people, the real risks of abuse and misuse are conveyed.

## 2. Underage Use

Once removed from criminal control lawful providers deny access to the underaged. Where states and local governments have responsibly managed the adult legalization youth use quickly and significantly declines.

## 3. Product Safety

Depending on state and local government management, cannabis products are safer and public health is enhanced.

## 4. Public and School Support

### Advantages of Adult Cannabis Legalization

When distribution of cannabis passes from institutionalized organized criminal control to transparent and regulated local businesses there are benefits to public health.

Underage access, and consequently use is typically reduced. Product safety is promoted through regulation and inspection and past criminal revenue may be used to public advantage.

#### Public Health

- Child Poisonings are reduced through warnings regarding unsafe storage and mandating labeling preventing children from inadvertently eating cannabis products.
- Reducing or eliminating the blending of other drugs with cannabis.
- Preventing or eliminating contamination from pesticides, mold, fungal spores, and plant absorbed toxic heavy metals.
- Posted accurate dosages preventing harm from variable potency levels.
- Health and Safety Warnings may be posted or available from brochures at the site of lawful sales. They may comment on driving risks and other unwise or dangerous cannabis influenced conduct including descriptions of civil and criminal liability for consciously or inadvertently allowing underage access to cannabis.

Both drug education and public information on risk of substance misuse are often supported.

### **5. Health Information**

Unreliable pro and anti-cannabis health and safety information can be replaced with legitimate and credible warnings to the public and especially youth.

### **Health and Risk**

Quantifying cannabis risk is challenging, with research often skewed to overstate or understate risk. There are several reasons for confusion.

- The chemistry of the cannabis plant involves variable blends of many mood-altering compounds which, along with dose, purity, and use setting, can confound research results. Because it's been illegal we often don't know exactly what is being used in what ways to associate with negative outcomes.
- Laws and attitudes regarding cannabis have improperly influenced the funding of research, the research itself, and especially lay publications which have often misinterpreted research findings.
- Legislative prohibitions have restricted limiting Randomized Clinical Trials (RCT), often defaulting to Real-World Evidence (RWE), which may be valuable but is more often subject to contamination with predetermined convictions and the chemical nature of the cannabis.

For decades it has been clear that cannabis is of medical value. Deferring patient use to the criminal justice system as opposed to health care providers was regrettable.


As the cannabis industry shifts from criminal control to transparent and regulated enterprises we can do better. The new empowered providers and regulators can guide and protect users with safer products and the community with transparent and enforced controls on packaging, marketing and warning of unsafe use.

Cannabis has been and is used responsibly by many healthy and productive

adults, but it also may support unwise or dangerous behavior. It represents special risks to certain groups, especially youth.

Comments on health and safety follow.

An 11-minute video summarizing risk.  
<https://envr.org/marijuana-risk-and-youth/>



### META-ANALYSIS OF HEALTH RISK

The National Academies of Science, Engineering, and Medicine completed a comprehensive review of over 10,000 academic journal-published marijuana health research studies. Their work remains a benchmark in understanding risk.

Dr. Marie McCormick, Chair of the Multi-Academy Review and Professor of Pediatrics at the Harvard School of Medicine released the following key findings after formal approval by each of the National Academies.

**Findings of the National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine\***

- 1. Medicinal Value**  
Marijuana has medical value in pain reduction involving muscle spasms, especially related to multiple sclerosis and cancer patients experiencing chemotherapy-induced nausea and vomiting.
- 2. Cancer**  
There is no evidence that smoking marijuana increases the risk of cancer, such as is a consequence of tobacco use.
- 3. Bronchitis**  
Smoking marijuana regularly may aggravate bronchitis and chronic coughing.

#### **4. Cardiovascular Complications**

Smoking marijuana by individuals with heart disease may increase the risk of cardiovascular complications.

#### **5. Pregnancy and Birth Weight**

There is some evidence (conflicting) that smoking marijuana during pregnancy positively correlates with lower birth weight.

#### **6. Mental Health**

Some mental health problems such as schizophrenia are concurrent with the use of marijuana. Marijuana may or may not “cause” schizophrenia. Possibly, those with schizophrenic tendencies may seek marijuana intoxication as a form of self-medication. Additional research in this area would be important.

#### **7. Motor Vehicle Operation**

Injury or death occurring while a person is intoxicated, particularly operating a motor vehicle, is a risk associated with marijuana use.

#### **8. Relationship to Other Drug Use**

The use of other more physically dangerous chemicals correlates with marijuana use. This includes alcohol misuse, the use of tobacco products, and the use of other drugs. Whether marijuana use is causative or statistically concurrent with the use of other drugs is not understood.

#### **9. Heavy Use Among Adolescents**

The use, especially heavy use, by adolescents is associated with both academic performance problems and socialization problems. Again, both may be concurrent as opposed to causative.

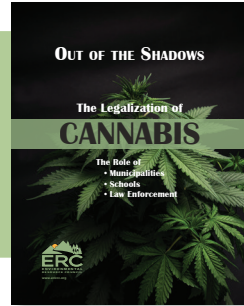
#### **10. Chemical Dependency**

Chronic and compulsive use can evolve into dependency problems, with adolescents being especially at risk.

\*Source: National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine.  
[www.nap.edu/catalog/24625/the-effects-of-cannabis-and-cannabinoids](http://www.nap.edu/catalog/24625/the-effects-of-cannabis-and-cannabinoids)

Following the publication of the National Academies assessments there has been substantial research into many aspects of cannabis use. We maintain an accessible summary of what we believe is relevant research regarding health and safety on our website.

Scan to download our free guide of detailed information on cannabis health and safety, other aspects of cannabis use, history and civics are also discussed or visit our website at [ENVRC.org](http://ENVRC.org).





# Confusion and Clarity

Good and caring people on both sides of the cannabis issue have spent the past 50 years emotionally throwing public health research and social values back and forth. Sometimes it seems everyone is yelling and no one is listening. Amid this noise, the first casualty is realistic perspective and the second is trust. You've got to take both back in this new era of legal adult use.



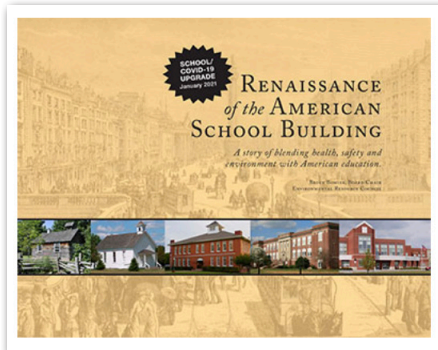
Millions of Americans have used cannabis and gone on to live healthy, productive, even model lives. Yet, no responsible person can question the reality that cannabis, can create risks for users, and most especially, the underage user. While many enjoy responsible use, the strongest cannabis advocate must accept that some users do stupid and dangerous things while high, and some use the drug compulsively to a point where a healthy lifestyle is compromised.

Lawful adult cannabis use is now be part of the world of our young people. They deserve to have the realities of cannabis use honestly and knowledgeably made clear by those whom they most trust. Responsibly guiding their children through the confusion is what good parents do best, and that is exactly what is needed now.

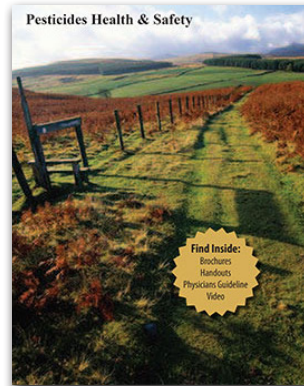
Good luck!

The Board and Staff of the  
Environmental Resource Council

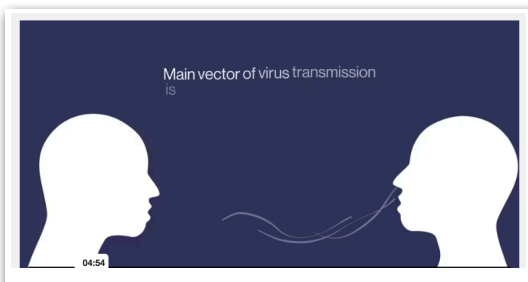
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