

Cannabis Toolkit: A Resource for Service Providers Working with Youth

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Maine Substance Use Disorders

Learning Community

Talking with Teens about Cannabis Use

A Resource Guide for Service Providers Working with Adolescents

MAINE SUD LEARNING COMMUNITY



**Maine Substance
Use Disorders
Learning Community**

Terminology

- § This toolkit uses both the terms ‘cannabis’ and ‘marijuana’ to refer to the same substance
- § Cannabis products usually contain THC (Delta-9) and can refer to several types: flower (leaf), concentrates, edibles, beverages, and topicals
- § Semi-synthetic and synthetic products may also exist (illegal?)
 - § Delta-8, Delta-10, THC-O, THC-P



Toolkit Development

§ This resource was published in August 2025 by the Maine Substance Use Disorders Learning Community

§ coordinated by the Co-Occurring Collaborative Serving Maine and funded through the Maine Office of Behavioral Health, Department of Health and Human Services

§ Several contributing authors

§ Ken Winters, PhD, Jesse Higgins, PMHNP, Kristen Erickson, MPH, & Catherine Chichester, MSN

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Premise for the Toolkit

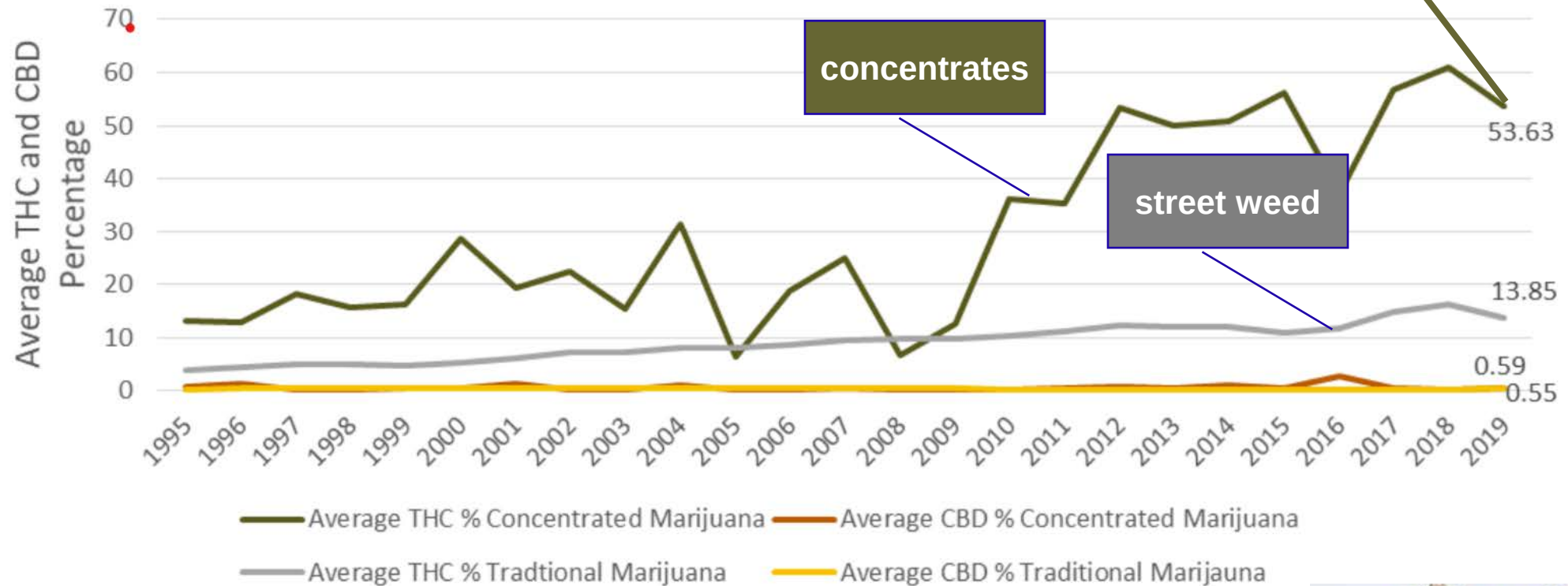
- § **After decades of decline, cannabis use by teens is on the rise**
 - § many states have legalized its use for adults
 - § perceived harm is down
 - § vaping popularity
- § **High-potency THC can be particularly harmful to a teen's developing brain, learning ability, and mental health**
- § **Healthcare providers are important prevention agents**
 - § influential
 - § provide accurate information
 - § assist with needed referrals



Modern Cannabis

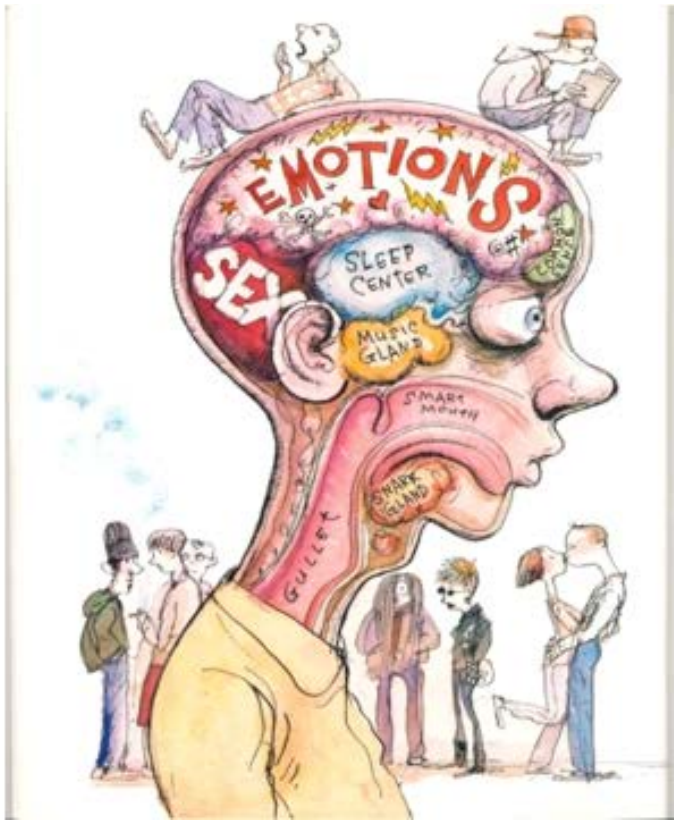
Maine does not have a THC potency cap

Figure 40. Average THC and CBD Potency of Traditional and Concentrated Marijuana, 1995 – 2019



Source: University of Mississippi



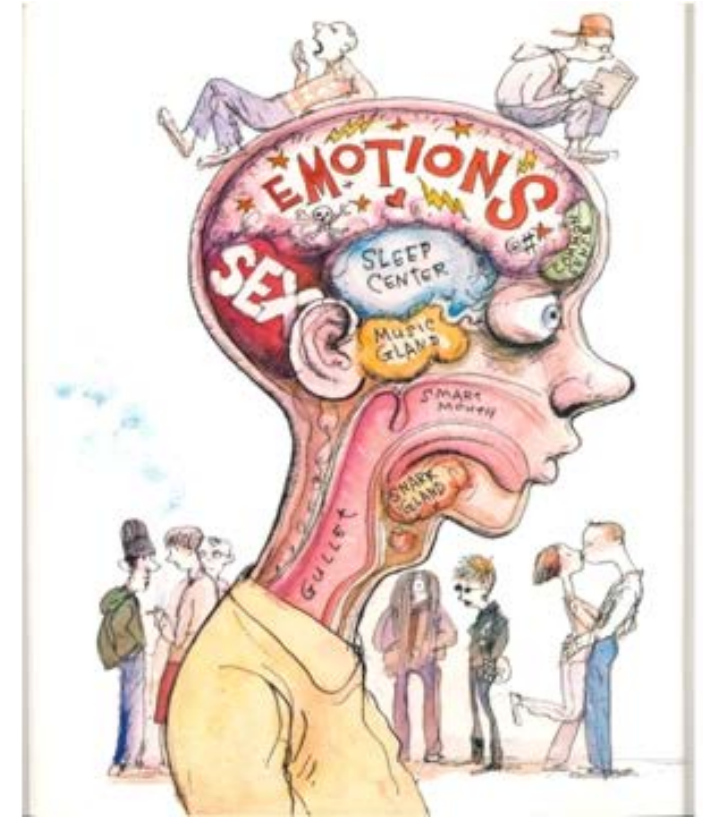


Source: US News &
World Report, 2005



§ Why is this issue so important for adolescents?

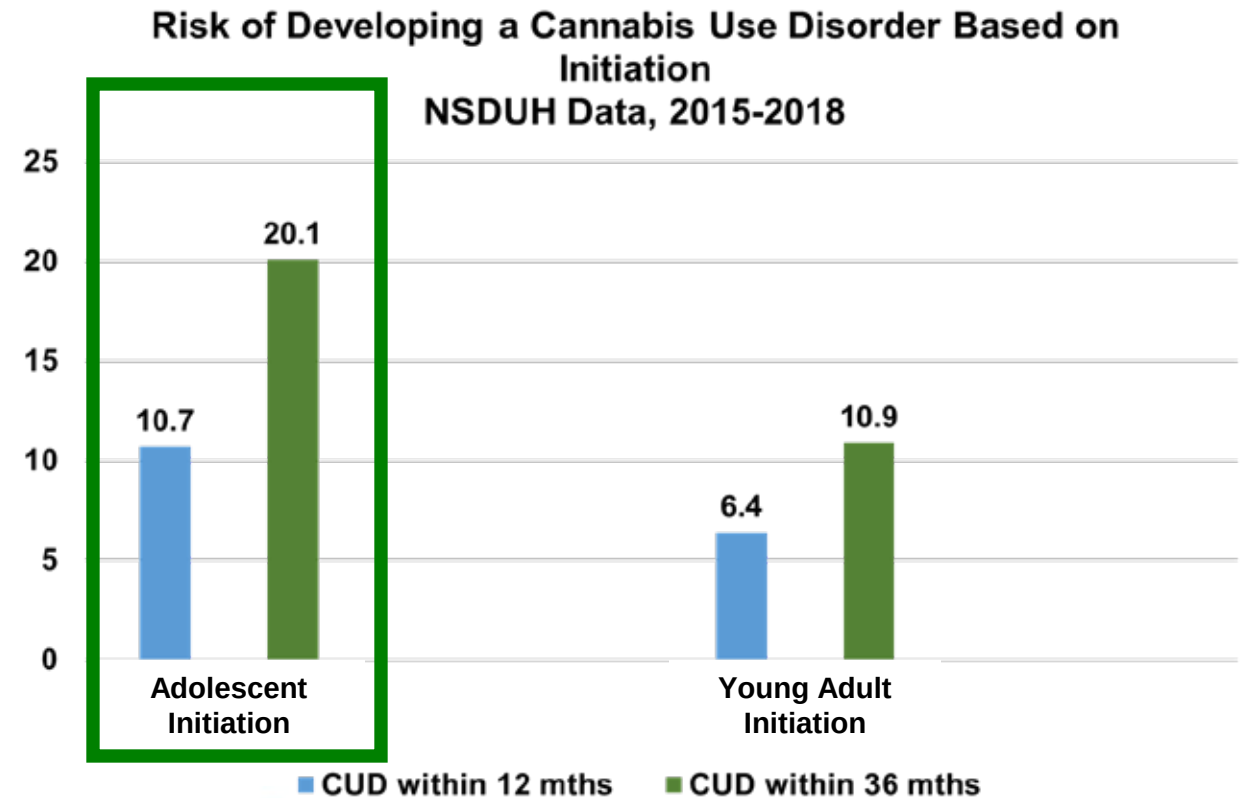
1. New users of cannabis are typically adolescents



Source: US News
World Report, 2016

Adolescent Use of Cannabis Increases the Risk for Addiction

- § Among teens who initiated use of cannabis during their teenage years
 - § within 12 months, 11% had developed a CUD
 - § within 36 months, 20% had met criteria for a CUD
- § There is a faster transition to a cannabis use problem the younger the age of initiation of use.



source: Volkow et al., 2021

§ Why is this issue so important for adolescents?

1. New users of cannabis are typically adolescents
2. The teen brain is still developing until about age 25; exposure to THC can disrupt brain development.



What Happens When the Developing Brain is Exposed to THC

- § When the teen uses THC, the brain's cell activity is overwhelmed, like “turning up the volume dial” all over the brain
- § Abnormally accelerates the pruning process
- § Contributes to disruptions in....
 - § controlling emotions
 - § coping with stress
 - § memory and learning
 - § making sound decisions
- § Elevates risk of mental health problems



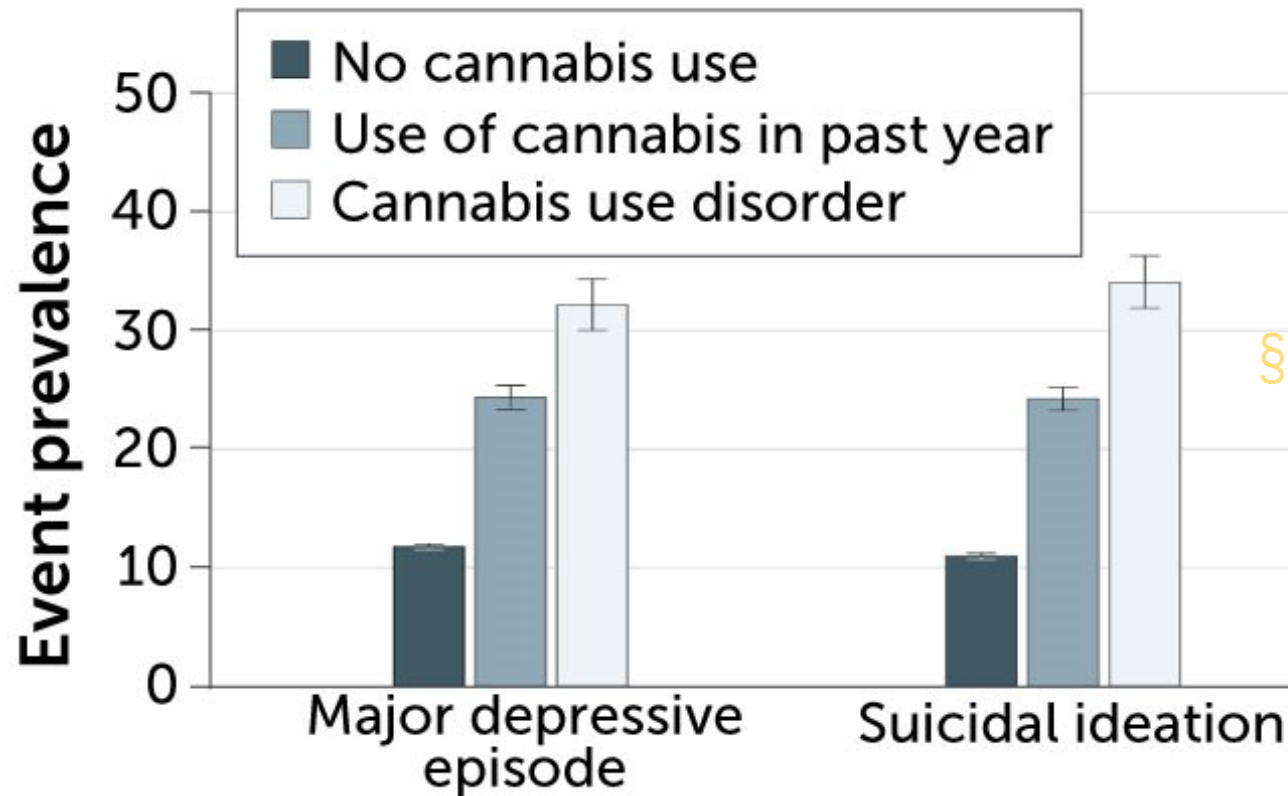
source: Recovery Research Institute

What Do the Experts Say About Depression & Suicide?

**“Cannabis Prevention is Suicide
Prevention”**

- Jessie Hinckley, MD, PhD, Department of Psychiatry, University of
Colorado School of Medicine

Cannabis Use: Association with Depression and Suicidal Ideation



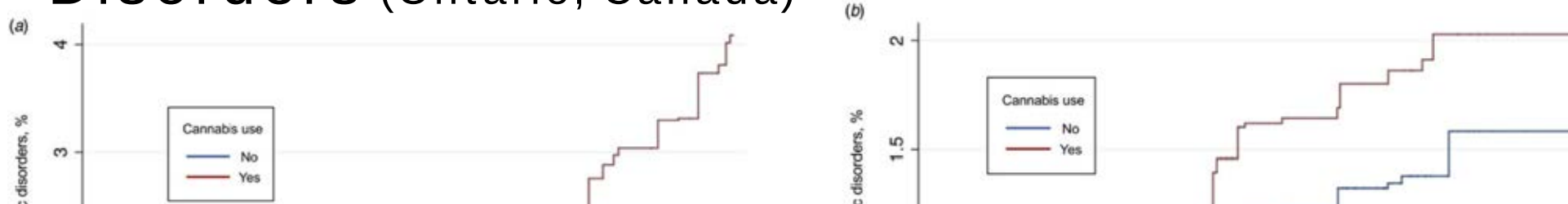
§ Based on pooled results of national survey data collected during 2015-2019 from 12-17-year-olds (NSDUH)

§ Recent cannabis use and presence of a Cannabis Use Disorder was associated with higher odds of

§ Major Depressive Disorder

§ suicidal ideation

Cannabis Use & Subsequent Psychotic Disorders (Ontario, Canada)



**12-19 year-olds with cannabis use:
11-fold increase of
psychosis compared to non-cannabis users**



population survey data from 2009-2012 linked with health records in 2019 in Ontario Canada

(a) Cumulative incidence of psychotic disorders stratified by cannabis use from 12 to 19 years of age.

(b) Cumulative incidence of psychotic disorders stratified by baseline cannabis use from 20 to 33 years of age.

Both charts: “No. at risk”: service utilization cases with a dx of a psychotic disorder.

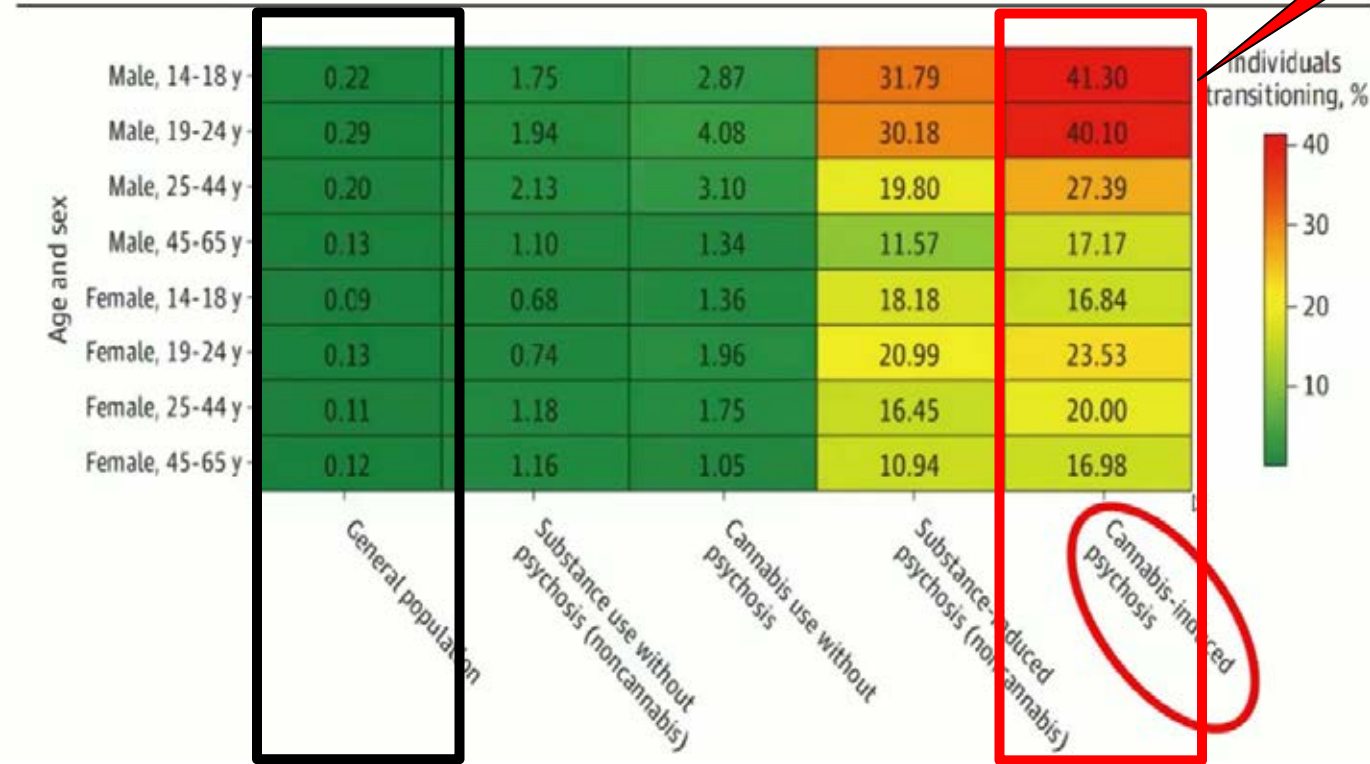
Transitioning to Schizophrenia After ED Visit Due to Substance Use (Ontario, Canada)



Transition to Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder Following ED Visits Due to Substance Use With and Without Psychosis

Myran DT, Harrison LD, Pugliese M, et al. Transition to Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder Following Emergency Department Visits Due to Substance Use With and Without Psychosis. JAMA Psychiatry. Published online September 27, 2023. doi:10.1001/jamapsychiatry.2023.3582

Figure 2. Risk of Transition to Schizophrenia Spectrum Disorder Within 3 Years Based on Age, Sex, and Substance Use



within 3 yrs,
41% among
young males

Toolkit Elements

- 1. Keys to a Conversation When Working with Teens**
- 2. Talking to Teens About Cannabis**
- 3. Parent and Caregivers: Guide to Preventing Cannabis Use**
- 4. Fact Sheet, Resources and References**



Toolkit Elements

1. **Keys to a Conversation When Working with Teens**
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Five Keys to a Conversation (pp. 3-5)

- 1. Getting the conversation started**
- 2. Be a good reflective listener**
- 3. Seek permission to offer your points of view**
- 4. Encourage the teen to make healthy decisions**
- 5. Maintain open dialogue**



1. Getting the Conversation Started

“What have you heard about marijuana? What do you know about it?”

“What do you think about people your age using marijuana?”

“How about you? What are your experiences with marijuana?”

2. Be a Good Reflective Listener

“Cannabis is legal for adults and you do not see it as bad as alcohol.”

“Your friends use cannabis, and you need to have friends.”

3. Seek Permission

“As your provider, I want you to know that I am concerned about how today’s strong cannabis can be harmful to a teen.”

“Here are some concerns I have: It can damage your developing brain; it can interfere with learning and your ability to do well in school; it can eventually lead to mental health problems.”

4. Encourage the Teen to Make Healthy Decisions

Engage in a discussion about realistic goals to cut back or abstain from cannabis use. Use a non-confrontational approach.

“It’s great that you are not using cannabis. I encourage you to stay the course.”

“Have you considered cutting back your use of cannabis? What are some ways you could do?”

5. Maintain Open Dialogue

“We can talk more about this if you want. I’m available to discuss these issues more.”

Toolkit Elements

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(pp. 6-10)

1. Guidance for responses to 12 specific statements that a teen you are working with might make about cannabis use

Source: US News & World Report, 2005

Source: US News & World Report, 2005

1. Guidance for Responses – See Handout (pp. 6-8 from Toolkit)

§ Which, if any, on the list have you heard from a teen client? How did you handle it?



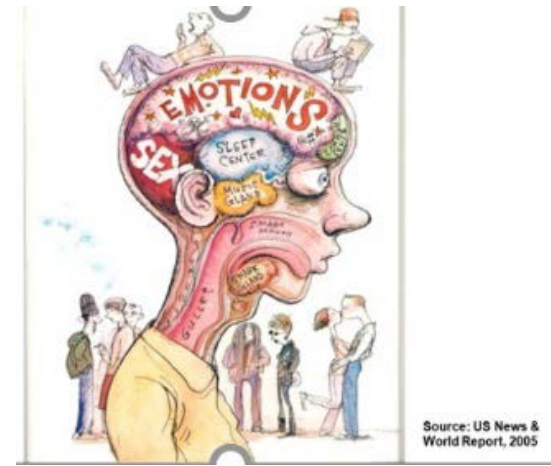
§ Which ones on the list seem the most challenging to respond to?

1. Guidance for Responses

§ General strategies

- § Profile science-based facts
- § Call into question cannabis industry claims
- § Stay in the lane “THC alters risk of health problems” rather than “THC causes health problems”
- § Admit uncertainty when it’s appropriate

2. Open-Ended Questions



Explore Use: “Can you tell me a little about your experiences with cannabis?”

Explore Goals: “How does cannabis fit into the kind of person you want to be or the goals you have?”

Motivation Gauge:
 “On a scale from 0 to 10, how important is it to you to make a change in your cannabis use?”

Confidence: “If you decided to make a change, what do you think would help you succeed?”

Elicit Concerns:

“What have you noticed about how cannabis affects your mood, energy, or schoolwork?”

Toolkit Elements

1. Keys to a Conversation When Working with Teens
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MATT



'I attend as many parenting classes as I can – anything to get away from my children'

Parents and Caregivers: Guide to Preventing Cannabis Use (pp. 11-13)

§ Parents are influential in three major ways:

- § parenting practices
- § modeling behavior
- § communicating values and attitudes



Washington State
(closeness & monitoring)



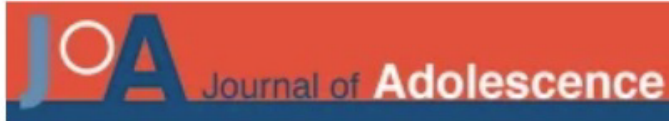
[Home](#) > [Journal of Child and Family Studies](#) > [Article](#)

Parents & Cannabis: Adolescents' Reports of Parent-Related Factors Associated with Their Attitudes About and Intentions to Use Cannabis

Original Paper | Published: 06 November 2024

Volume 33, pages 3428–3439, (2024) [Cite this article](#)

Stacey J. T. Hust , J. Willoughby, L. Couto & J. Li



REVIEW ARTICLE

Parenting and Adolescent Substance Use: What Works, What Does Not, and What Is Next

Caitlin C. Abar , Bonnie Rose Thomson, Gabrielle Steinwachs

First published: 10 March 2025 | <https://doi.org/10.1002/jad.12488>



Literature Review
International Studies
(modeling, monitoring & knowledge)

Parents and Caregivers: Guide to Preventing Cannabis Use (pp. 11-13)

§Six ingredients are described

1. Be informed
2. Talk early and often
3. Conversation tips
4. Be a prevention agent in the home
5. Signs of a problem
6. Legal use by the parent



Parents and Caregivers: Guide to Preventing Cannabis Use (pp. 11-13)

§Six ingredients are described

1. **Be informed**
2. **Talk early and often**
3. **Conversation tips**
4. **Be a prevention agent in the home**
5. **Signs of a problem**
6. **Legal use by the parent**



Be Informed

§ Parents need to stay informed about the latest developments in cannabis.

§ Parents need to be genuine when emphasizing that you don't want your teen to get into a habit that may do real harm to his or her well-being.

§ Use the “Fact Sheet” (pp. 14-15) to help inform the parent about the harms of use of THC by teenagers

- § High potency products

- § Behavioral risks

- § Mental health risks

- § Safety and health risks

- § Environmental concerns



Parents and Caregivers: Guide to Preventing Cannabis Use (pp. 11-13)

§Six ingredients are described

1. Be informed
2. Talk early and often
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4. Be a prevention agent in the home
5. Signs of a problem
6. Legal use by the parent



Signs of a Problem

§Changes

§behavior, mood, attitude, friends

§Home signs

§drug paraphernalia, physical signs, missing money

§School signs

§less interest, drop in grades



Parents and Caregivers: Guide to Preventing Cannabis Use (pp. 11-13)

§Six ingredients are described

1. Be informed
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4. Be a prevention agent in the home
5. Signs of a problem
6. Legal use by the parent



Legal Use By The Parent

- § Not supplying cannabis to your teen
- § Avoid using when your teen is present
- § Store products in a secure place, including medicinal cannabis
- § Avoid glamorizing cannabis
- § Express disapproval of underage use
- § Understand that your teen is likely aware of when you are intoxicated



Toolkit Elements

1. Keys to a Conversation When Working with Teens
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Fact Sheet (pp. 14-15)

§ **Two-page fact sheet focuses on these core issues:**

§ **High Potency Cannabis**

§ **Behavioral Risks**

§ **Mental Health Risks**

§ **Health and Safety Risks**

§ **Environmental Risks**



Resources (p. 16)

§ Seven online resources for parents & caregivers:

§ some focus on parenting practices, others cannabis-specific

National Institute on Drug Abuse. (2018). [MARIJUANA: Facts Parents Need to Know.](#)

Partnership to End Addiction. (2024). [CANNABIS \(MARIJUANA\): What Families Need to Know to Help Protect Children, Teens and Young Adults.](#)

Parent Action Network. (2024). [Preventing Drug Use & Knowing When to Be Concerned.](#)

The Maryland Collaborative (2025). [College Parents Matter: Cannabis.](#)

Ruffin, M, The Maryland Collaborative (2022). [Cannabis Fact Sheet: Let's Talk About Cannabis.](#)

Stanford REACH Lab (2025). [Parent Corner.](#)

Prevention Action Alliance (2025). [Marijuana Fact Sheets.](#)

References (pp. 17-19)

- § **A complete set of the 28 citations is provided, with links for easy access**
- § **many are peer-reviewed publications in top-level journals**



Summary

- § Preventing cannabis use among teens is a top priority for service providers.
- § The cannabis toolkit supports your efforts to educate your teen clients and their parents/guardians about cannabis issues.
- § A conversation with your teen client can promote their health and well-being.
- § A conversation with parents/guardians provides an additional boost to your efforts.

Summary

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③



THANK YOU!

Reactions, Questions, Comments



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