

The BULLETIN

May/June 2022

ADDICTION



A Timeline for the Evolution of
Addiction Treatment

Stop Calling It Behavioral Health!

Thoughts From the Substance Use
Treatment Trenches

Insurance and Access to Care-You
are Covered, Right?

Legalization of Marijuana and
Implications for Health

Punishment vs. Treatment,
Substance Use Disorder

**National Council on Alcoholism and
Drug Dependence – Rochester Area**

**Just the facts,
know the
risks...**

Using marijuana while driving **is illegal
in NYS for the driver and passenger(s).**

Impaired or drugged driving jeopardizes the
safety of all who travel on NYS roads and highways!

After alcohol, marijuana is the most commonly
identified drugs in deadly crashes.

**Legal does not equal safe.
Marijuana is an addictive drug.**

- Marijuana is only legal in NYS for those
21 and older.
- Did you know marijuana is often first drug
teens try, but not the last!?
- Did you know marijuana is often the #1 reason teens seek treatment?

The potency of marijuana has increased dramatically in the last several decades. THC, the cannabinoid producing the high, is at 20 percent or more in many states where it has been legalized. With concentrates, THC potency often exceeds 75-85 percent or more! As the potency of marijuana increases, the potential for addiction also increases.

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LEGALIZATION OF MARIJUANA AND IMPLICATIONS FOR HEALTH *JUST THE FACTS, KNOW THE RISKS!*

BY JENNIFER FARINGER, MS.ED, CPP-G, DIRECTOR, DEPAUL'S NATIONAL COUNCIL ON ALCOHOLISM AND DRUG DEPENDENCE-ROCHESTER AREA

New York State enacted the Marijuana Regulation and Taxation Act (MRTA) at the end of March 2021, legalizing and regulating the use and possession of cannabis for adults ages 21 and older and paving the way for an influx of marijuana dispensaries and marijuana lounges throughout the state of New York. While this is being promoted as an opportunity for new businesses, it is important to recognize the potential risks and impact on our communities, families, and youth. It is important to have the facts and know the risks.

Legal does not equal safe. Marijuana remains an addictive drug.

While we continue to focus on the devastating opioid epidemic with needed and ongoing efforts to address barriers and turn the tide around tragic overdoses, opioids are rarely a teens first experience with drug use. Alcohol, nicotine (in the form of vaping) and marijuana are the top three drugs that most significantly places young people at risk. Marijuana is often the first drug teens try, but not the last! Data has shown that as the perception of risk of marijuana declines, marijuana use increases. These two data points illustrate an inverse relationship. Legalization has increased access and further decreased the perception of risk.

One of the primary issues of concern for youth and young adults is marijuana's impact on cognitive abilities. Marijuana has been shown to decrease IQ by as much as six to seven points with early, regular use. Early use has also been shown to alter the structure of the developing brain, increasing, or exacerbating vulnerabilities to mental health conditions. Teens sometimes self-medicate, using marijuana to cope with anxiety and depression, but

studies have found that using marijuana makes dealing with both conditions that much more difficult. Smoking or vaping marijuana damages lung tissue just as tobacco does. During this time of COVID and our heightened awareness of the value of a healthy immune system, we know that marijuana decreases the body's ability to fight infection, thus weakening the immune system.

Despite legalization or medicalization, marijuana remains an addictive drug! The THC (Tetrahydrocannabinol) potency in marijuana has increased considerably over the last several decades from one to four percent the 1960's to 20% currently in several states. With upwards of 80 to 90 percent THC in concentrates, edibles have become of particular concern.

Increasing instances of pediatric poisonings have been cited by the Upstate Poison Control Center due to children ingesting a variety of edible products. Available in a wide variety of forms, from candies and chips to ice cream and soda, edibles are packaged in such a way to make them not only tempting for children but are often indistinguishable from actual food products. With marijuana products being purposely bred for higher and higher THC content, it is not a surprise that the risk of becoming addicted has also increased. Nor is it a surprise that marijuana is often the number one reason teens seek treatment.

The risk lies in the fact that when edibles are ingested, the effects are not felt as quickly as when THC is smoked or vaped. This delayed reaction or response time, more often than not leads to an individual ingesting more in order to feel the expected effect. With children, this can and does too often result in pediatric poisoning incidences. Effects range from drowsiness or lethargy, loss of muscle

coordination, agitation, or irritability. More critically, children under three are prone to comas, respiratory depression, and single or multiple seizures because of accidental ingestion of THC edible products.

The use of marijuana during pregnancy is an additional cause for concern. A growing number of women are being ill-advised to treat their morning sickness with marijuana. Marijuana use during pregnancy poses serious risks to the unborn child. Similar to advice around the risks of drinking alcohol during pregnancy, there is no amount of marijuana that has been proven to be safe to consume during pregnancy. The American Academy of Pediatrics advises women who are both pregnant and nursing to avoid marijuana use. THC as well as the hundreds of other chemicals found in marijuana may be transmitted to the baby through breast milk which may increase the baby's risk for impaired cognitive development.

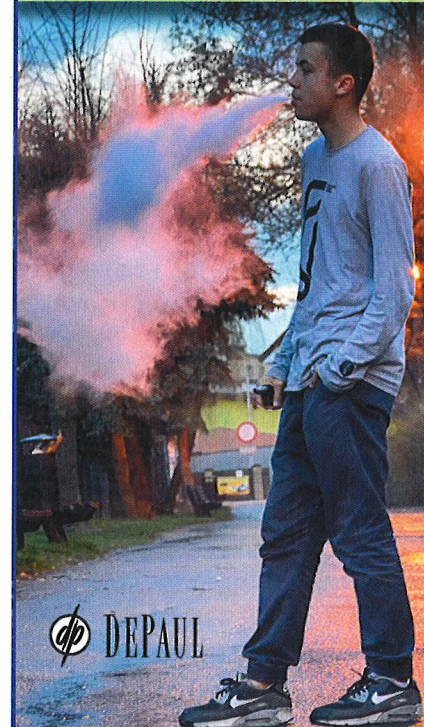
Studies have found that marijuana use during pregnancy may be harmful to the health of the baby. Marijuana use during pregnancy increases the chances of stillbirth and pre-term birth and has been linked to lower birth weights. Most significantly, there are mounting studies that show there may be long-lasting effects to the cognitive development of the child including effects on memory, learning and behavior, as well as a potential increase in vulnerability to substance use and misuse in their adolescent years.

Another concern is the predictable increase in drugged driving rates, which has been noted in prior Monroe County STOP DWI Reports. Driving while impaired is illegal no matter what substance is being consumed. The NYS Cannabis Control Board has made it clear that driving while intoxicated from marijuana is illegal. It is also illegal for any passengers in the vehicle to be using marijuana. The individual using marijuana is often unaware of their level of intoxication. They have the perception that they are in control and focused. The reality is that they have a fixation of focus, a decrease in peripheral vision, and a slower reaction time, all of which contribute to marijuana being one of the most identified drugs in deadly crashes, second only to alcohol. Impaired or drugged driving jeopardizes the safety of all who travel on NYS roads and highways.

For more information and a wide range of resources for parents and the community, visit our website awareness page at: <https://ncadd-ra.org/resources/awareness-campaigns/marijuana/>.

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- Coping with depression and anxiety as a teen is already tough. Use of marijuana makes it that much harder.
- Early use is shown to alter brain structure and increase vulnerabilities to mental health conditions.
- Shown to decrease IQ with early, regular use.
- No smoking zones apply not only to tobacco products but also to marijuana smoking or vaping!
- Marijuana, like tobacco and vaping, damages lung tissue.
- Marijuana decreases the body's ability to fight infection, weakening the immune system.

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Jennifer Faringer is the director of DePaul's NCADD-RA (National Council on Alcoholism & Drug Dependence - Rochester Area). Jennifer has worked in the field of substance use prevention and education for over 30 years. She has been involved in the development of both professional and community education and awareness programs. She serves on the Executive Committee of the Finger Lakes Consortium of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services, also serving as Public Policy chair. She serves on the statewide Board of ASAP (Association of Substance Abuse Providers) of NYS as Vice President, also serving as Co-Chair of the ASAP Prevention Committee. Additionally, she serves on the Council on Addictions of New York State Executive Committee, serving as Chair of Membership and Past President. Jennifer received her Bachelors from Syracuse University and her Masters in Health Education from SUNY Brockport. Jennifer also holds the NYS OASAS Credential for Prevention Professionals with a specialty in problem gambling. Jennifer was awarded the Outstanding Contribution to the Field from Finger Lakes CASAS and the Eileen Penzer Victory Award from NYS ASAP. She presents frequently at regional, state-wide and national conferences on a variety of addiction related topics.