

Marijuana Harmless? Think Again

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Legal Marijuana Would Harm Arizona's Children

Don't use Arizona's children as lab rats in the social experiment with marijuana, professionals say.

Medical professionals and others reacted with great concern to the announcement last week that Arizona Representative Orr wants to legalize marijuana for recreational purposes.

"I am really worried about what marijuana legalization would do to Arizona's children," says Dale Guthrie, M.D., a Chandler pediatrician. "In my role as President of the Arizona Chapter, American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) over the last couple of years, I hear firsthand of the problems occurring in Colorado and Washington, where the Presidents of those two AAP chapters are close friends of mine."

Colorado and Washington are the only two states with legal marijuana for recreation. Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper just recently declared that legalization in his state is "reckless."

Rep. Orr cited anticipated tax revenue as a reason for legalizing the drug. However, according to Dr. Guthrie, "The dollars expected in increased government revenue are turning out to be quite exaggerated, especially in Colorado. The larger – and more important – cost in the equation is what legalization is doing and will do to our youth, young adults, and adults. We now have research which proves marijuana's harmful effects on young brains. Even if marijuana were profitable as a tax generator (which it has not been), the harm imposed on society because of its effects on individual Arizonans would never make it 'worth it.'"

Voters in Colorado passed legal marijuana for recreational use in 2012. A recent Suffolk University USA Today poll found that support for legal marijuana in Colorado has plummeted 17% due to the negative impact of the drug on the state.

"Legalization of marijuana in Arizona for recreational use is far from inevitable," says Merilee Fowler, Arizona state director of the *Marijuana Harmless? Think Again!* movement. The group is closely watching Colorado. According to Fowler, "Data shows teens in Colorado use marijuana at a rate 39% higher than the national

About Marijuana Harmless? Think Again!

Marijuana Harmless? Think Again! is a nonpartisan alliance of concerned citizens, business professionals and community leaders who are committed to raising awareness about the harms of marijuana. Marijuana is an addictive substance that affects the brain, especially in kids, in ways that impair intelligence, reasoning, judgment and clarity of thought. The legalization of marijuana in Arizona would result in an additional 32,000 high school students being more likely to use the drug putting them at risk in school and in life.

average, and school suspensions and expulsions due to marijuana use have soared 32% since the 2008-09 academic year.”

Ed Gogek, M.D., an Arizona addiction psychiatrist, also warns against legalizing marijuana. "No one should believe that legalizing marijuana for adults would protect teenagers. Nothing tells children and teens ‘try this drug’ like seeing adults use it legally. Adolescents who smoke marijuana do worse in school, drop out at twice the rate of non-users, and earn less as adults. Research shows teenage use causes subtle but lifelong cognitive damage. Because their brains are still developing, teenagers have much higher rates of addiction—one in six kids who use marijuana becomes addicted.”

Shelly Mowrey of Prevention First AZ says backers of both medical and recreational use of marijuana always promise they will keep it out of the hands of our kids. “This promise has been broken in every single state that passes these laws. The fact is that legalization means more access and lowered perception of risk - both resulting in more kids using. Studies show that if marijuana is legalized in Arizona, 32,000 of our high school students who have never tried marijuana would be more likely to try it. Why would we knowingly create an industry that will target our children with an addictive drug?”

“It is not surprising that fewer Colorado residents today support the legalization of marijuana,” stated Sheila Polk, Yavapai County Attorney and a member of *Marijuana Harmless? Think Again!* “Colorado traffic fatalities involving drivers with THC in their system have doubled since 2007 and marijuana-related emergency room visits are on the rise, including accidental child exposures.”

“At a minimum,” Polk urges, “Arizona should let the experiment play out in Colorado and not rush to join them. Our children are too precious to use as lab rats.”

A full report on the effects of legal marijuana in Colorado can be found at www.rmhidta.org.