

MARIJUANA  
PREVENTION  
TOOLKIT  
KNOW THE FACTS



# MARIJUANA PREVENTION TOOLKIT

United Way of Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse has developed this Toolkit as part of *“Prevention in a Box”* to bring relevant information about marijuana prevention to individuals, families, practitioners, and other key community stakeholders. The Commission on Substance Abuse is dedicated to empowering our diverse community to live healthy and drug-free. Recognizing the consequences of substance abuse and mental health conditions among Broward County youth and adults, the Commission seeks to distribute accurate information and resources that promote health and wellness.

The Commission strives to build individual, family, and community competence and capacity for lasting positive social change. **Today, the majority of youth and adults in Broward County do not misuse substances.** The Commission, therefore, encourages all individuals to read, review, and utilize this toolkit in its entirety.

Sincerely,



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## Mission

United Way of Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse’s mission is to **empower our diverse community to live healthy and drug-free.**

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# MARIJUANA

Marijuana, one of the most-often used drugs, is a product of the hemp plant, *Cannabis sativa*.

Marijuana is composed of a mixture of dried and shredded leaves, stems, seeds, and flowers of the plant that can be smoked, eaten, drunk, and inhaled.

Some marijuana is grown in nature, and other marijuana is chemically manipulated and/or laced with other substances.

Marijuana drug sales are not regulated by any authority, and as a result the buyer cannot be sure of what he or she is getting.

The main active chemical in marijuana is tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) whose concentration in marijuana is linked to its potency.

With respect to marijuana, individual reactions and experiences vary making it important to understand the risks and effects.

Through marijuana use, THC passes into the bloodstream to organs throughout the body, including the brain, where it affects the cannabinoid receptors and the endogenous cannabinoids.

THC in marijuana overstimulates brain receptors affecting mental processing and producing a mild elation.

## **Marijuana is an addictive drug.**

Consistent brain receptor stimulation by ongoing marijuana use can cause addiction.

Marijuana can also serve as a “gateway” to more serious drug use and substance abuse.

Marijuana dependence is among the most common forms of illicit-drug dependence.



Marijuana today is much more potent than it was in the past and it is often mixed with other substances that have intense side effects.

**Negative Marijuana Effects** include:

- Distorted thinking and perception
- Disrupted attention, learning, and memory
- Impaired judgement
- Impaired coordination and balance
- Decreased energy and motivation
- Depression
- Paranoia
- Anxiety

**Long-term Marijuana Effects** include:

- Brain dysfunction
- Sleeping difficulty
- Irritability
- Psychosis
- Occupational and social problems
- Respiratory disorders associated with use
- Withdrawal

**Effective treatment is available for marijuana addiction. Recovery is possible!**



## LAWS AND LEGAL CONSEQUENCES

In Florida, marijuana possession and use is illegal.

In Florida, the sale and purchase of marijuana is illegal.

In Florida, marijuana possession and/or sale can be classified as a misdemeanor or felony.

In Florida, mandatory sentencing can range from 1 to 30 years of incarceration and from \$1,000 to \$200,000 in fines.

In Florida, conviction can cause a driver's license suspension for a period of 2 years.

After alcohol, marijuana is the drug most often linked to car accidents, including those involving death.

Marijuana affects skills required for safe driving – alertness, concentration, coordination, judgement, and reaction time.

## STORY OF HOPE AND RECOVERY

### Sean's Story

I started smoking marijuana when I was in the 7th or 8th grade. I started smoking it with some friends from school, but by the time I was a sophomore in high school, I was getting it and smoking it on my own. Throughout high school, I lost interest in my classes and most school activities. I also became more self-conscious, panicky, and sometimes depressed. By the time I was a senior, marijuana was numbing my body. Sometimes it was a good escape, but mostly it got scary. I started taking risks and smoking at school. Eventually, I was caught. I completely missed my graduation and almost did not even get my diploma. I was referred to treatment by the school counselor, which I initially hated, but then it started to make sense. I not only completed the program, but eventually got admitted to college (better late than never). Today, I am clean for 3 years and almost have my AA degree.

# EDUCATING INDIVIDUALS

## Marijuana Effects

### Physical Symptoms

Physical symptoms associated with marijuana use include:

- Impaired brain development
- Impaired body movement and motor skills
- Increased breathing problems
- Increased heart rate

### Psychological Symptoms

Psychological symptoms associated with marijuana use include:

- Altered senses
- Mood changes and disorders
- Reduced thought processes and memory
- Lowered ambition

### Protective Measures

Employing protective factors with marijuana is vital.

These protective factors include:

- Obtain factual education about marijuana
- Cope with urges and peer pressure
- Do not be afraid to say “No”
- Seek treatment for marijuana addiction
- Create a balanced lifestyle
- Be a positive role model
- Associate with individuals who do not use marijuana
- Participate in social and community activities of interest



# INFORMING FAMILIES

The positive influence of family and the home environment promotes an individual's well-being.

Families play an extremely critical role in preventing marijuana use and addiction.

It is important for families to understand the implications of marijuana use and addiction.

Attitudes and behaviors within the family often shape the attitudes and behaviors of all family members.

Families can and should discuss marijuana use.

## FAMILY GUIDANCE

Guidelines to help families include:

- Educate yourself and your family members on marijuana
- Communicate the importance of healthy attitudes and behaviors
- Encourage positive conversation and listen
- Set clear expectations about using marijuana
- Discuss ways to refuse marijuana and other drug offers
- Be observant of family member's condition, mood, and behaviors
- Maintain open and regular communication
- Get treatment support for someone suspected of marijuana abuse or dependence
- Remember it's never too young to start talking about preventative measures as marijuana use can start at any age
- Take advantage of teachable moments





# TOOLS FOR EDUCATORS

Youth and young adults spend a considerable amount of time in school.

Educators and school administration should be aware of marijuana use and dependence.

Marijuana use is present in schools and on college campuses.

Educators and school administrators can play a pivotal role in decreasing and preventing marijuana use and dependence.

Marijuana use affects learning, academic performance, and grades.

Marijuana use affects school and class attendance as well as drop-out rates.

Marijuana use affects healthy brain development and functioning.

## TIPS FOR EDUCATORS

Educational institutions can employ the following strategies related to marijuana use:

- Institute policies about marijuana possession and use
- Provide training to faculty and staff on marijuana
- Consider marijuana use when students display symptomology
- Implement evidence-based substance abuse education and prevention programming
- Utilize substance abuse screening and early detection approaches
- Establish standard protocols for detected substance abuse among students
- Promote suspension alternatives
- Partner with treatment and medical practitioners
- Get treatment support for someone suspected of marijuana abuse or dependence



# TIPS FOR EMPLOYERS

Employers may notice an emotional state or behavior in an employee that may be a sign of marijuana use and/or abuse.

Marijuana use and abuse may negatively impact an individual's workplace attendance and performance.

Marijuana use and abuse in the work environment can present a safety risk and liability.

**Marijuana Abuse** by an employee can be associated with:

- Decreased alertness
- Mental confusion
- Concentration difficulties
- Impaired thinking
- Memory problems
- Changes in sensory perception
- Loss of balance and coordination
- Inability to perform and/or complete tasks
- Decreased productivity
- Workplace accidents

## TOOLS FOR EMPLOYERS

Employers can utilize the following strategies related to marijuana use:

- Institute a drug-free workplace
- Implement drug-free policies and activities
- Provide workplace substance abuse prevention education
- Offer specialized supervisory training
- Ensure access to employee assistance counseling and treatment
- Select a health insurance plan with addiction treatment coverage



## INFORMING PRACTITIONERS

A number of health and human service practitioners play a vital role in the prevention and treatment of marijuana abuse.

These practitioners include:

- Doctors
- Nurses
- Health Educators
- Clinicians
- Social Workers
- Certified Addiction Professionals

### TIPS & TOOLS FOR PRACTITIONERS

The medical and human service communities can employ the following strategies to address marijuana use:

- Screen individuals for substance abuse
- Educate individuals about marijuana use and abuse and its consequences
- Provide health promotion counseling
- Assess and monitor individuals' health status
- Monitor patients' response to treatment
- Engage in continuing education regarding marijuana use and abuse

# ADVOCACY STRATEGIES

Preventing marijuana use and abuse requires a community-wide response and sense of responsibility.

Equally important is decreasing any stigma associated with individuals using marijuana as well as those persons requiring marijuana abuse treatment.

Education, advocacy, and community action are essential for health promotion associated with marijuana use.

## SOCIAL ACTION

The following strategies can be employed to address marijuana use by advocating for:

- General factual community education, information dissemination and prevention regarding marijuana
- Health care practitioner education regarding marijuana
- Insurance coverage and treatment access for individuals with marijuana abuse and dependence
- De-stigmatization of individuals requiring substance abuse treatment
- Legislation that promotes substance abuse prevention and expands treatment access
- Write legislators supporting these bills
- Write legislators about your family's experience with marijuana use and addiction



# HEALTH PROMOTION PLAN

By completing this page, individuals can examine health status and health promotion behaviors.

## General Health Rating

Excellent       Good       Fair       Poor

## Do you

Use marijuana?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Use marijuana regularly or frequently?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Use marijuana alone and/or to cope?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Experience negative consequences from using marijuana?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Plan your life around getting and/or using marijuana?	_____ YES	_____ NO
Unsuccessful attempts to reduce or stop marijuana use?	_____ YES	_____ NO

## YES answers to any of these questions may indicate potential risk.

Health Risks (Factors that Negatively Impact Health): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Health Promotion (Factors that Positively Impact Health): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Health Goal(s): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Strategies to Accomplish Health Goals: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Success Influencers (Factors that Positively Impact Goal Attainment): \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Where to go for help: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Other Important Factors: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_



# RESOURCES

**United Way of Broward County Commission on Substance Abuse**

[www.drugfreebroward.org](http://www.drugfreebroward.org)

**Marijuana Anonymous**

[www.marijuana-anonymous.org](http://www.marijuana-anonymous.org)

**Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration**

[www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

**National Treatment Referral Helpline**

1-800-662-HELP (4357) or 1-800-487-4889 (TDD for hearing impaired)

**Smart Recovery®**

[www.smartrecovery.org](http://www.smartrecovery.org)

**The Partnership at Drug-Free.org (Partnership for Drug-Free Kids)**

[www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)

**2-1-1 Broward 24 Hour Information and Referral Helpline**

[www.211-broward.org](http://www.211-broward.org)

Dial 2-1-1 or 954-537-0211

# SOURCES

**National Institute of Drug Abuse**

**National Council of Alcoholism and Drug Dependence, Inc.**

**Florida Statute**

**Substance Abuse in Mental Health Services Administration**



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