

Cannabis and Public Health in Alaska

In July 2017, the Department of Health and Social Services (DHSS) established The Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention (OSMAP). OSMAP has on staff a full-time public health specialist to develop and coordinate evidence-based strategies to:

- promote safe marijuana use
- prevent misuse
- collect, analyze and disseminate data

Additionally, in 2015, DHSS convened a cross-agency marijuana workgroup whose mission is to use evidence-based strategies to develop public health interventions that serve to minimize marijuana-related adverse health consequences in Alaska.

Work to date:

Promotion of safe and legal marijuana use: DHSS has developed and disseminated public education through social, print, and broadcast media. Public education includes information about the law; fact sheets designed for parents and youth, drugged driving, marijuana use during pregnancy and while breastfeeding; and a series of point-of-sale materials for marijuana users or people contemplating using marijuana. All of these education materials can be found on the Alaska Division of Public Health website at:

www.marijuana.dhss.alaska.gov.



Get the Facts About Marijuana

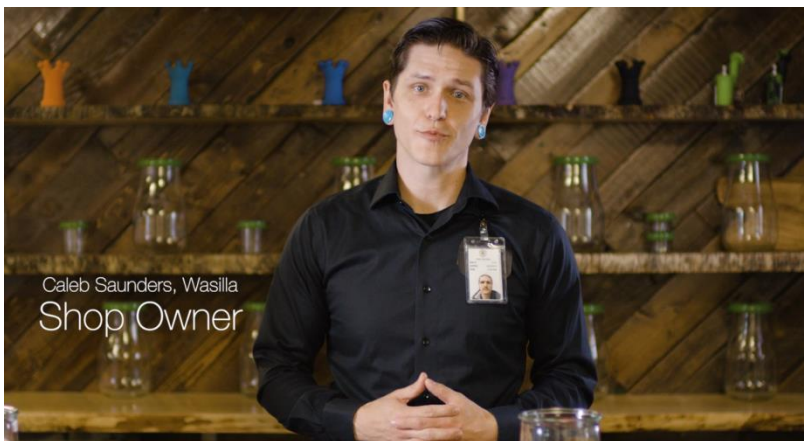


Get the Facts About Marijuana





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Data collection, analysis, and dissemination:

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) 2016

- 15% of all Alaska adults and 24% of Alaska Native adults reported using marijuana at least once in the past 30 days (vaporizing, smoking, eating, consuming in a beverage, dabbing, and/or other).
- Men were more likely than women to be current marijuana users (19% versus 12%, respectively).

Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) 2017

- More Alaska high school students currently use marijuana (22%) than smoke tobacco (11%).

- The percentage of high school students who currently use marijuana has not changed significantly from 2007 (21%) to 2017 (22%).
- The percentage of high school students who have ever used marijuana has decreased between 2007 (45%) to 2017 (42%). However, the percentage has increased among females between 2015 (35.4%) to 2017 (43.9%).
- Current marijuana use has also increased among females between 2015 (17%) to 2017 (23%).
- Alaska Native females have the highest prevalence of current and ever use of marijuana (34.7% and 63.8%, respectively).
- Among students who drove a car or other vehicle, 16% report driving after using marijuana.
- 19% of students think that there is great risk of harm in using marijuana 1-2 times per week.
- The percentage of high school students who first tried marijuana before age 13 has not significantly changed from 2007 (12%) to 2017 (11%).

Marijuana use and public health

Priority areas include:

- Youth access and initiation
- Driving while under the influence of marijuana
- Use by pregnant women and breastfeeding mothers
- Health problems associated with heavy marijuana use

OR, CO, and WA have monitored youth marijuana use as they have legalized retail marijuana in recent years, and have yet to see significant changes in use. All have funded health and public health efforts to monitor and prevent youth marijuana use, and have funded substance use screening, brief intervention, and referral to treatment.

Status/Next Steps

Legislation has been introduced that would appropriate 25% to 50% of the marijuana tax revenue to fund marijuana use education, youth prevention, and treatment services.