



Make An Impact: Marijuana in Your Community

Youth Marijuana Access

As a community, we can all work to limit availability and access to marijuana and other substances for our youth. Strategies include limiting outlet density and hours of sale, appropriate taxation to maintain price barriers, and reducing access through social sources, safe storage and retailer compliance. Additionally, if adult use marijuana retail stores consistently check identification for age verification, support compliance checks to ensure safety measures, and regularly train employees, the risks of youth access diminishes.

Resources

- [Good to Know](#)
- [Maine Marijuana Education Toolkit](#)
- [Office of Marijuana Policy](#)
- [You Are Prevention](#)
- [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#)

Why it matters

According to the Maine Integrated Youth Health Survey, youth who report marijuana is easy to get or believe that use is not risky are more likely to use.¹ A young person's brain is not fully developed until about the age of 25, making them more vulnerable to the effects of substances.

Age of initiation is associated with substance use disorder later in life – according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, people who begin using marijuana before the age of 18 are 4-7 times more likely than adults to develop a marijuana use disorder.² **Frequent marijuana use during adolescence is associated with changes in the areas of the brain involved in attention, memory, decision-making, and motivation.**⁵ Marijuana use has a stronger negative relationship to GPA, risk of dropping out and other outcomes than alcohol use.

Early use also increases risk for serious mental health problems.⁶ In 2019, Maine high school students who reported using marijuana within the past 30 days were twice as likely to have been sad/hopeless in the past year and twice as likely to have seriously considered suicide.¹

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Talking Points

- **Youth access is decreased when adults do not share marijuana with youth and practice safe storage.** This can be especially important for parents or trusted adults who choose to use and may have marijuana in the home. It can be important to remember that safe storage looks different for younger children than it does for older teens.
- **By modeling retail policies from alcohol and tobacco sales control, we can provide the same prevention and education strategies to reduce youth use of marijuana.** These policies include age verification at point of sale, compliance checks, consistent employee training, and prohibiting home delivery and online sales.
- **Effective enforcement strategies to reduce and prevent harms associated with underage consumption include retailer penalties for furnishing,³ compliance checks,⁶ and providing incentives for ID checking.⁵** These strategies have been effective in limiting alcohol and tobacco access.
- **Youth are the most price sensitive.** Frequent tobacco tax increases to keep the price high have been proven to be an effective strategy in reducing underage use.
- **Safe storage is an essential strategy to prevent accidental ingestion for both children and pets.** It is not always easy to tell if a product contains THC.

What You Can Do

Communities are most effective in preventing and reducing youth substance use when they integrate an environmental approach.

- Contact your local Substance Use Prevention Coalition (visit YouArePrevention.org).
- Visit the Maine Office of Marijuana Policy's webpage for updates.
- Collaborate with local law enforcement to see how you can support or help with compliance checks.
- Educate your community about the importance of keeping marijuana stored in locked containers out of reach of youth.
- To reduce accidental ingestion by youth, encourage the use of the universal symbol on all marijuana products in both the medical and adult use programs.
- By including the entire community in prevention, we can partner with lawmakers, teachers, law enforcement, and trusted adults to promote stronger decision making skills and healthier communities.

References

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