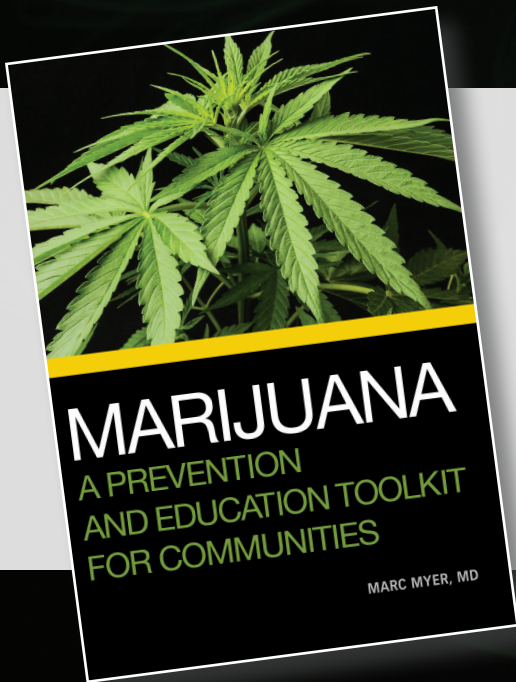


FREE
"SHARE THE TRUTH"
Resource

Marijuana is addictive.



After alcohol, marijuana is the most prevalent mind-altering drug used in the United States. This comprehensive resource provides reproducible materials to create an effective, multidisciplinary plan for addressing marijuana misuse in your community.



How Can You Initiate Change in Your Community?

Community and media events, no matter how large or small, can go a long way toward building awareness and keeping marijuana in the forefront of public dialogue. Events also offer networking opportunities, connecting neighbors, empowering families, and acquainting citizens with valuable resources. Events of solidarity let everyone know that a community united is a force to be reckoned with. Best of all, such events are an effective way to engage all community citizens, including children, in a common purpose.

Here are some tips on creating an event:

- **Host a marijuana education forum or roundtable discussion** in a local community center, place of worship, or public facility. These are consistently well received and attended.
- **Create a community marijuana awareness website.** Your online presence will provide a way to keep the discussion going, will welcome new traffic, and will allow you to update your message, goals, and events. See the Tips for Developing Website Content document in the Campaign Resources section of this toolkit for help creating your website.
- **Encourage stakeholders** (including businesses, health service organizations, social services, law enforcement, schools, and families in your community) to join together to plan and participate in marijuana awareness events. Health fairs, essay and poster contests, and drug- and alcohol-free concerts are just some of the ways communities can empower citizens to become part of the solution.
- **Start a local youth “improv” troupe to perform vignettes** concerning marijuana and to lead community discussions about the drug.
- **Invite people in recovery to talk** to your community about marijuana addiction and its impact. Encourage parents to attend these presentations with their teens.
- **Invite local artists to create pieces** that depict the tragedy of drug addiction and the hope of recovery.
- **Join with other communities** to hold a themed walk or bicycle ride.
- **Hold a mock drug court** to demonstrate this process to your community.
- **Use press releases, public service announcements, and flyers to promote your event.** See the Campaign Resources section of this toolkit for sample press releases, PSAs, and flyers.
- **Host community video discussion evenings for teens and adults.** Documentaries and educational videos can be effective resources to enhance prevention programs. Schedule a screening of the video found in this toolkit, and look for news programs or other TV specials on marijuana and its effects to use.

CREATE MARIJUANA AWARENESS POSTERS

As part of your local marijuana education program, encourage schoolkids to create posters to promote drug prevention and awareness that can be featured throughout the community. Work with local business owners who agree to hang the posters in their business and even donate prizes (movie tickets, free pizza, and so on) for designing the best poster. Use the sample posters in the Campaign Resources section of this toolkit for inspiration or to support your marijuana awareness campaign.

- **Conduct online chat forums or a community webinar.** Online outreach efforts may be more conducive to busy schedules and may attract community members you wouldn't otherwise reach.

Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF)

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, “the Strategic Prevention Framework steps are designed to help states, jurisdictions, tribes, and communities build the necessary infrastructure for effective and sustainable prevention. Each step highlights key milestones and products that are essential to the process.

“The SPF uses a five-step planning process to guide . . . in the selection, implementation, and evaluation of effective, culturally appropriate, and sustainable prevention activities.

“The SPF process:

- Promotes youth development
- Reduces risk-taking behaviors
- Builds assets and resilience
- Prevents problem behaviors across the lifespan of the programs

“The idea behind SPF is to use findings from public health research along with evidence-based prevention programs to build capacity and sustainable prevention. This, in turn, promotes resilience and decreases risk factors in individuals, families, and communities.”¹

Visit www.samhsa.gov/spf for more information. To learn more about currently funded grants using the SPF, explore SAMHSA's Partnerships for Success program. For information about SAMSHA's available grant opportunities and resources to help you apply for grants, visit www.samhsa.gov/grants.

Start a Marijuana Education Program

Education programs are effective in reducing drug use. In 2012, a special report of the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) revealed that 75 percent of youth ages twelve to seventeen reported having seen or heard drug or alcohol prevention messages at school. Of those students, 8.9 percent reported using an illicit drug in the past month, versus 12.3 percent among students who reported no exposure to such messages.²

The NSDUH report reaffirms the crucial role parents play in keeping their children off drugs. For instance, young people who believe their parents would strongly disapprove of their use of marijuana are far less likely to have used it in the last month than youth who don't receive such messages from their parents (4.3 percent versus 31 percent).³

When families, peers, and the community support school prevention programs by sending the consistent message that drug use is not tolerated, it can have a powerful effect on young people.

Print and Distribute Other Guides from This Toolkit

In addition to this Guide for Community Mobilization, this toolkit includes other print-ready guides. All may be printed, photocopied, and distributed to important stakeholders in your community. Distribute A Guide for Schools to teachers, guidance counselors, school nurses, and administrators in all the schools in your county. A Guide for Parents can be offered at community and school meetings. Distribute A Guide for Health Care Professionals to physicians and other stakeholders at your county's medical clinics, hospitals, and emergency room facilities. A Guide for Employers can be given to businesses in your area, and A Guide for Policy can be distributed to community activists and those responsible for creating regulatory

framework for your jurisdiction. Use the samples provided in the Campaign Resources to create your own press releases, posters, and brochures as well as to support digital efforts. The video included in this toolkit can be used in any number of settings.

Communities throughout the United States have made significant progress toward increasing awareness about the dangers associated with marijuana use, but continuing preventative action at the state and community levels is essential to ensuring that marijuana does not become the drug of choice for a new generation.

Using Drug Courts to Address Marijuana

Drug courts are designed to handle cases involving offenders who misuse addictive drugs. Offenders charged with less serious crimes, such as being under the influence or possessing a controlled substance—or even drug-using offenders charged with a non-drug-related crime—may be given the option of entering the drug court system instead of serving a jail sentence. They must plead guilty to the charge and agree to take part in treatment, regular drug screenings, and regular reporting to the drug court judge for a minimum of one year. If offenders fail to comply with one or more of the requirements, they may be removed from the drug court program and incarcerated at the judge's discretion. If they complete the program, the charges brought against them are dropped.

According to the National Association of Drug Court Professionals, 75 percent of drug court graduates remain arrest-free at least two years after leaving the program, drug court participants are more likely to comply with treatment, and children of family drug court participants spend significantly less time in the foster care system than children of offenders who do not participate in the programs.⁴

Treatment for substance use disorders plays a central role in the drug court system, and public health and public safety work together to optimize outcomes for offenders. Of course, communities must have effective and accessible treatment strategies in place. Many drug court professionals join local or state action committees or task forces, and many drug court prosecutors and police personnel volunteer to speak to community groups, faith communities, and businesses about the issues surrounding drug use.

The Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA) provides leadership and services in grant administration and criminal justice policy to support local, state, and tribal justice strategies to achieve safer communities.

Visit the Bureau of Justice website www.bja.gov for more information about the BJA, its programs, and its funding opportunities.

Notes

1. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, "Strategic Prevention Framework," last updated January 2016, www.samhsa.gov/spf.

2. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *Results from the 2012 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: Summary of National Findings*, NSDUH Series H-48, HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4863 (Rockville, MD: Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, 2014).

3. Ibid.

4. National Association of Drug Court Professionals, "The Verdict Is In: Drug Courts Work," NADCP, www.nadcp.org/learn/do-drug-courts-work.