

## APA Official Actions

# Position Statement on the Impact of Cannabis on Children and Adolescents

Approved by the Board of Trustees, December 2020

Approved by the Assembly, November 2020

“Policy documents are approved by the APA Assembly and Board of Trustees. . . These are . . . position statements that define APA official policy on specific subjects. . .” – *APA Operations Manual*

### Issue:

As more states legalize cannabis use and access increases, we must carefully consider the impact on children and adolescents. Adult use has increased as a direct result of legalization but increases in youth onset and overall use are less clear. Accidental ingestion is also a concern and growing problem. Risk perception around the harms of cannabis is decreasing among youth, another cause for concern. Vaping culture blurs the lines between the use of legal and illegal drugs, further complicating the situation and putting young people at risk. Expansion in medical uses of marijuana, despite lack of scientific evidence, FDA approval, and regulation, introduces access to a potential comfort therapy for life threatening and severely debilitating conditions, but this access must be weighed against the risks of introducing an addicting substance into a still-developing brain. Caution is prudent until there is evidence of safety and efficacy of both cannabis and its constituent components given the known risks of cannabis use in youth. Children and adolescents are more likely to be more vulnerable to neuropsychiatric symptoms linked to cannabis. Risk for psychosis is a paramount concern given the onset of symptoms coinciding with late adolescence. This position statement was developed through review of the evidence to date and to establish the APA's consensus on the matter.

### APA Position:

**Given the lack of scientific support for safe cannabis use, and the known adverse impacts and risk for addiction, APA opposes the use of cannabis by children, adolescents, and young adults up to age 25. Cumulative years of use and earlier onset are risk factors for greater consequences, making the delay to onset of cannabis use essential. The potential therapeutic components of cannabis warrant study because the current evidence base for benefits does not outweigh the known risks. APA strongly supports further study to better understand both the risks and potential medical use of these compounds. APA recommends increased monitoring of youth patterns of cannabis use, especially in states with legalization of cannabis. Additionally, APA recommends comprehensive policies to ensure manufacturers are held accountable for providing accurate information on the risks associated with cannabis use. There should also be strict enforcement of regulations that limit marketing and advertising to children and adolescents, especially in formulations that mimic candy items, and limiting production/sales of such child targeted products.**

**In a separate position statement, the APA does not endorse non-FDA approved cannabis products as medicine.**

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