

## Cannabis Legalization- Risks for Youth

The federal government classifies cannabis as a Schedule I Controlled Substance which the DEA describes as "a drug with no currently accepted medical use and a high potential for abuse". However, 18 states including Connecticut have legalized adult use of cannabis and 36 states have approved it for medical use.

### Some highlights of the new CT law:

- The possession and consumption of cannabis is legal for adults 21 years and older beginning July 1, 2021. Adults 21 and older may possess 1.5 ounces of cannabis in public, and up to five ounces in a locked container or at home.\*
- It creates a system for retail sale of cannabis, making it a Class A misdemeanor for selling to anyone under the age of 21.
- "Social Host" component- no person shall knowingly permit anyone under the age of 21 to possess cannabis in their home or dwelling.
- There are no specified limits for potency in combustible, vaporized, or concentrate products in the law. For edibles or beverages, a max of 5 mg THC per serving is allowed.
- Advertising cannot appeal to or target anyone under the age of 21.
- Consumption in a vehicle is prohibited.

\*1 ounce of cannabis = 28 grams, or enough for 30 or more "joints"

For an overview of the Connecticut Cannabis Legalization Law- Public Act 21-1 click [here](#)

With these changes in policy, culture, and increased availability, more and more people are using cannabis. We have seen the impact this has had on attitudes and behaviors of youth.

Here is what the data is telling us around the nation and in region 5:

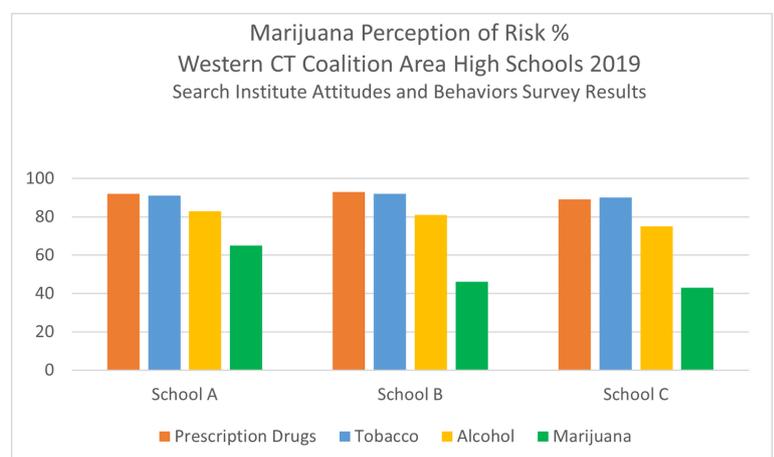
### Marijuana use trends among high school youth in Western CT:

Past 30-day use of marijuana reported in 2019 was on average 16%  
12th graders report past 30 day use rates as high as 39%

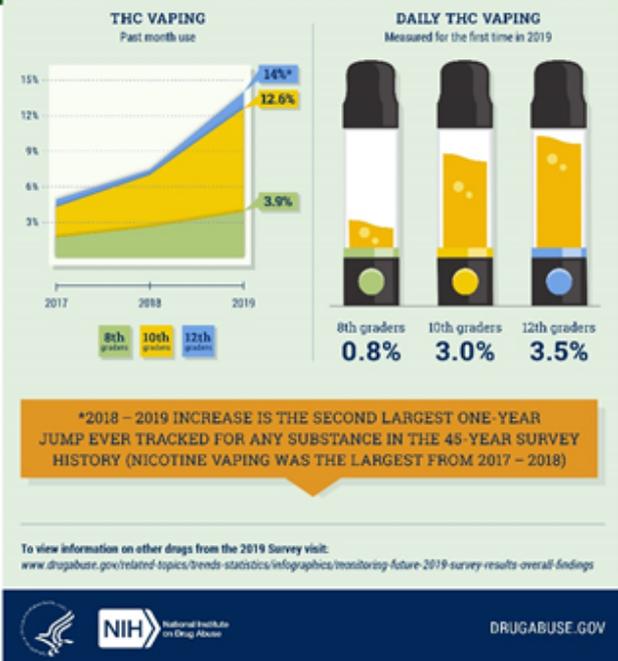
Vaping marijuana was reported locally as well. In one high school, of the 23% surveyed who reported they vape, 50% said they vaped marijuana

Search Institute Attitudes and Behaviors Surveys in 7 school districts

As indicated by the chart below, youth in our region, don't think marijuana is as harmful as alcohol, smoking cigarettes or misusing prescription drugs



**TEEN VAPING CLIMBS SIGNIFICANTLY\***



Nationwide Data

The graphic on the left is from the 2019 Monitoring the Future survey. It shows that past month marijuana vaping among 12th graders nearly doubled in a single year from 7.5% to 14% –the second largest one-year jump ever tracked for any substance in the 45 year history of the survey. (The largest was from 2017-2018 with past month nicotine vaping among 12th graders).



**Marijuana Facts and Trends**

Today's marijuana is much stronger than it used to be. Tetrahydrocannabinol, or THC is the active ingredient in marijuana that causes intoxication. The amount of THC found in today's marijuana can be as high as 30% compared to less than 10% in the 1970's, 80's and 90's. National Institute on Drug Abuse

Vape devices have become a more common way for youth to use marijuana. Young people may perceive that this type of use is safer, because they are not smoking, but there is risk of consuming high concentration levels of THC- as high as 80-90% has been reported.

No one under the age of 21 should use marijuana. Young people's brains are still developing until the age of 25. Using a substance like marijuana during this critical time of growth and vulnerability is particularly harmful. HHS.gov. Office of the Surgeon General



**Based on research and scientific evidence, these are the risks to youth who use cannabis:**

New England Journal of Medicine

- **Addiction**- There is evidence to support that early marijuana use and addiction predicts an increased risk of the use of other illicit drugs.
- **Long-lasting Cognitive Impairments**- including diminished ability to visually scan, to pay attention, and to control impulses.
- **Mental Illness**- Marijuana use is linked with psychoses, including those associated with schizophrenia. It has been linked to an increased risk of developing anxiety disorders and depression as an adult.
- **Other adverse effects** of long-term adolescent use include poor educational outcomes, diminished life satisfaction and achievement, and lower IQ.

**What can parents do? Talk to your kids....**

- Parents have a significant influence over their children's decision to experiment with drugs.
- Its never too early to start conversations about drug and alcohol use. Age of onset for substance use can be as early as 9-10 years old.
- Be direct and be honest. Know the facts.



Talk They Hear you is a program developed by SAMHSA