

**County of Santa Clara**  
Department of Alcohol and Drug Services  
Health and Hospital System



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**Department of Alcohol and Drug Services (DADS)  
Youth Marijuana Prevention**

At its core, Santa Clara County DADS is focused on the prevention of substance abuse problems in the community. As such, DADS takes on the responsibility of educating children, parents, families, and communities on the facts behind substance abuse causes, symptoms, and outcomes.

Currently in our community, as well as in the larger society, the issue of marijuana is at the forefront of political and social discourse. There are many questions yet to be answered with regards to dispensary regulation/elimination, state and federal legislation, enforcement, and societal/political views. However, one aspect of the marijuana issue that is generally agreed upon by all sides is the importance of youth prevention. Some of the facts with regards to youth marijuana use include:

- More than 60% of high school seniors report that they don't view marijuana as harmful to them
- Research has shown that the less risky a child believes a drug to be, the more likely s/he will use
- 6.5% of high school seniors are daily or near daily marijuana users
- The younger youth were when they started using marijuana heavily, the more abnormally their brain regions were shaped, with the potential for the permanent loss of 6-8 IQ points
- Numerous studies have found a link between teen marijuana use and psychosis or schizophrenia
- Youth that smoke marijuana every weekend for two years are almost six times more likely to drop out of high school than nonsmokers, more than three times less likely to enter college than nonsmokers, and more than four times less likely to earn a college degree
- Of the 12<sup>th</sup> graders who say they have used marijuana in the previous 12 months and who reside in states that have marijuana use laws, 34% say that one of their sources of marijuana is another person's medical marijuana recommendation. Six percent say they get it from their own recommendation.

DADS will provide information to youth, parents, and communities, to assist them in making informed decisions on how they view marijuana. Parents and youth will be provided with presentations and other forms of information dissemination that explain the reality of youth marijuana use, its consequences, as well as ideas for prevention and/or treatment.

DADS will provide research findings and consultation (based on current data and local/state/national trends) to government officials and partner agencies and organizations. The goal of this effort is to assist these individuals and organizations in making informed policy decisions that affect the community at large.

For questions on Santa Clara County DADS's work on the issue of marijuana in our local community, please contact Dr. Sue Nelson, Division Director, Santa Clara County DADS at (408) 272-6555.