



Facilitator’s Guide for the *Cannabis Prevention Toolkit: Parent Materials*

Sources:

**Smart Approaches to Marijuana Minnesota (SAMMn)
(www.sammn.org)**

&

**The Minnesota Prevention Alliance (MPA)
(<https://mnpreventionalliance.org/>)**

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Contact Ken Winters, Ph.D., winte001@umn.edu, for technical assistance and toolkit updates

Overview

The objective of the *Cannabis Prevention Toolkit: Parent Materials* is to support prevention service providers and other outreach workers to educate parents about the risks of cannabis use. This resource, developed by a team from Smart Approaches to Marijuana Minnesota and The Minnesota Prevention Alliance, focuses on the potential harms of adolescent cannabis use and how parents can strengthen their role as a prevention force in the home. Our toolkit is expected to eventually include materials for youth and all adults.

This resource is prevention science-informed and consists of content and activities that support presentations by trainers to provide meaningful, engaging and educational events to attendees. Content is drawn from several sources, including literature reviews of prevention best practices (e.g., Robertson et al., 2003; Winters et al., 2007), implementation science (e.g., Kurtzman & Greene, 2016; Skidmore et al., 2010), prevention experts, and several existing prevention resources. This latter group includes the following:

- Prevention Action Alliance’s Marijuana Toolkit (<https://preventionactionalliance.org/resources/marijuana-toolkit/>);
- Partnership to End Addiction’s Marijuana Talk Kit (https://drugfree.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/02/Marijuana_Talk_Kit.pdf);
- Stanford Medicine’s Cannabis Awareness & Prevention Toolkit (<https://med.stanford.edu/cannabispreventiontoolkit.html>);
- Getting it Right from the Start ([https:// www.gettingitrightfromthestart.org/](https://www.gettingitrightfromthestart.org/)); and
- SAMHSA’s Preventing Marijuana Use Among Youth (<https://www.samhsa.gov/resource/ebp/preventing-marijuana-use-among-youth>).

Overview of Development

The development of this resource is based on several core principles:

1. Legalization of cannabis for adults may contribute to an increase in the prevalence of cannabis use. State survey data comparing pre- and post-legalization cannabis use rates tend to show increases among young adults (e.g., Kilmer et al., 2022, Lachance et al. 2022). Studies on the impact of legalization in U.S. states on adolescent cannabis use

show mixed results, with some showing an increase, some showing no change (e.g., Athanassiou et al., 2023; Cerda et al., 2017; Farrelly et al., 2023; Gunadi et al., 2022; Manthey et al., 2023; Mennis et al., 2023).

2. Cannabis in the U.S. is more potent and potentially more harmful than typical products from generations in the past, and there is considerable evidence that health and safety risks can accompany cannabis use, particularly when use begins during adolescence and use is frequent and involves high potency products (e.g., Fischer et al., 2022; Volkow et al., 2014).
3. Many parents lack science-based and factual information about the effects of cannabis use on health and safety of adolescents, and sizable percentages report they have not talked with their adolescent about cannabis use (Jones et al., 2020; Kosterman et al., 2016). Emerging evidence suggests that adolescents may be particularly susceptible to the adverse effects of cannabis use, including increased risks to brain development, mental health, addiction, learning, and driving ability (e.g., Riggs et al., 2023; Volkow et al., 2016).
4. Despite the reality that parents are faced with many challenges when addressing cannabis use by adolescents, parents can be a key socializing influence on their teen and can be an effective prevention agent in the home when supported by relevant health information (Jones et al., 2020; Darling & Steinberg, 1993; Winters et al., 2015). Increased knowledge and perception of harms associated with cannabis use by underage youth is significantly correlated with lower levels of current use and intent to use (Harrison et al., 2023), and parents are a key vehicle in communicating this knowledge.
5. Parents simply telling a teenager about the harms of cannabis use is rarely sufficient as a protective measure (e.g., Hanson et al., 2018; Nonnemaker et al., 2012; Sternberg et al., 2019). Effective communication strategies and modeling behaviors, as well as promoting adolescent drug-resistance skills, are keys for prevention-minded parents.

Intended Use

This component of our toolkit is intended for parents who seek information about adolescent cannabis use and health. Appropriate parent events and gatherings, including those where adolescents are in attendance, for this resource are:

- community-based substance use prevention programs;
- community health fairs;
- preseason school-based events for athletics and fine arts activities;
- school-based parent association events; and
- parent groups supporting teens in recovery from a mental health issue or a substance use problem.

Learning Objectives

Parents who attend your presentation should be able to:

1. Gain awareness that legalized cannabis products may have potency levels that far exceed what was typical generations back and that these high potency products can be unsafe.
2. Understand how cannabis can have a harmful impact on an adolescent's developing brain, which is still maturing until about age 25.
3. Summarize the potential damaging effects of cannabis on an adolescent's mental health, learning, social life, and driving skills.
4. List ways to strengthen your parenting skills.

User-Friendly Features

The resource contains several user-friendly features:

- A choice among two versions based on length of presentation (30-minutes and 60-90 minutes);
- Science-based and engaging information and activities (e.g., quizzes, group discussion questions, videos);
- Speaker notes from some slides; and
- Additional features in the Appendix (see pp. 10-21)

- presentations at a glance
- lists of topics in the supplemental slide bank
- sample event invitation
- sample event evaluation questionnaire
- handouts for exercises
- handouts of resources

Build Your Own Presentation

Adjustments of your presentation are encouraged when you see a need to tailor your presentation for attendees. Adjustments can involve adding local data on teen cannabis use (see <http://www.sumn.org/>), moving and/or replacing slides, providing different group discussion questions, and showing a different video than what is suggested. As noted above, content from the supplemental slide bank can be used for this purpose (contact Ken Winters, wint001@umn.edu, for access to this material).

Adaptations are advisable for presentations to parents who share a particular context. For example, content could be added when talking with parents of teens in recovery from mental health issues or from addiction. Please cite sources for any new slides you are introducing.

Presentation Tips

It is suggested that your presentation style use motivational interviewing techniques (Miller & Rollnick, 2012). These useful communication tips can enhance your credibility as a presenter and optimize attendees' engagement and learning. Three core motivational interviewing strategies and example statements are provided below.

Reflective Listening

Reflective listening is a communication strategy that confirms you understood correctly (e.g., by paraphrasing). Examples:

I hear what you are saying. It's a challenge these days when raising a teenager.

You have already talked about cannabis use with your teen and it will help to have more information.

Develop Discrepancy

The strategy of developing discrepancy builds awareness by creating a gap in the difference between one's current behavior and attitude and a desired and different outcome or behavior. It can facilitate insight in the parent that some type of change is needed.

You want to help your teen grow up healthy. Yet by not communicating concerns about the harms of cannabis use, your teen may think use is okay.

Change talk

Change talk or statement by a person reveals consideration of, motivation for, or commitment to make changes. The facilitator can encourage change talk among parents attending the talk with “change eliciting” questions and discussions.

What are ways you can start the conversation with your teenager?

Identify situations in your family that are favorable for a good time and setting to have a conversation about your concerns.

In what ways can you be a good role model for your teenager?

Topics for Each Parent Presentation

A listing of the topics for the two versions (30-minutes and 60-90-minutes) are provided below.

30-Minute Presentation

1. Setting the stage
2. Core health topics, with quizzes and discussion questions
 - potency
 - edibles
 - harm to teen brain
 - harm to social development
 - harm to teen mental health
 - cannabis & driving safety
3. Short video, with discussion

4. Parenting keys, with discussion
5. Summary
6. Resources

60-90-Minute Presentation

1. Setting the stage
2. Core health topics, with quizzes and discussion questions
 - potency
 - edibles
 - harm to teen brain
 - harm to social development
 - harm to teen mental health
 - cannabis & driving safety
 - impact of cannabis production on environment
3. Two short videos, with discussion
4. Parenting keys, with discussion
5. Summary
6. Resources

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Appendix

Presentations at a Glance

List of Topics in Supplemental Slide Bank

Sample Event Invitation

Sample Event Evaluation Questionnaire

Handouts: Exercises and Resources

30-Minute Presentation at a Glance

Topic	Section Time (min.)
Setting the stage	2
Short quiz, with discussion	10
Short video, with discussion	5
Parenting keys, with discussion	10
Summary	3
Resources (handouts)	-
Total Time	30 minutes

60-90-Minute Presentation at a Glance

Topic	Section Time (min.)
Setting the stage	5
Longer quiz, with discussion	20-25
Two short videos, with discussion	10-20
Parenting keys, with discussion	20-30
Summary	5-10
Resources (handouts)	-
Total time	60-90 minutes

List of Topics in the Supplemental Slide Bank
(for access to these slides, contact Ken Winters at winte001@umn.edu)

- 1. Setting the stage**
- 2. Quiz items**
- 3. The cannabis plant and consumption methods**
- 4. Pharmacokinetics of cannabis**
- 5. Is cannabis medicine?**
- 6. How popular is cannabis?**
- 7. THC and the teen brain**
- 8. THC and learning and social development**
- 9. THC and addiction**
- 10. THC and mental health**
- 11. THC and physical health**
- 12. Cannabis and driving safety**
- 13. Cannabis and social issues**
- 14. Cannabis and environmental impact**
- 15. Cannabis legislation in Minnesota**
- 16. Cannabis legalization and enforcement issues**
- 17. History of cannabis**
- 18. Parenting**
- 19. Activities**
- 20. Videos**
- 21. Resources**

Sample Event Invitation

title of the event

date and location of the event

xxxxx will provide a parent educational event on xxxx from xxxx to xxxx at xxxxxx. This event will educate parents about the risks of adolescent cannabis use and how parents can strengthen their role as a prevention influencer in the home.

Who should attend?

The event is for parents of teenagers who want to learn about the health and safety harms when teenagers use cannabis and the keys to being a drug prevention-wise parent. This event is teenage-friendly and please feel free to have your teenager attend with you.

Parents and teenagers who attend will:

- Appreciate that some legalized cannabis has potency levels that far exceed what was typical generations back, and that these high potency cannabis products can be particularly unsafe;
- Understand how cannabis can have a negative impact on a teenager's developing brain;
- Be able to summarize the potential harmful effects of cannabis on a teenager's mental health, learning, social life, and driving skills; and
- Gain appreciation of ways to strengthen your parenting skills as a health-promotion force in the home.

If you want more information about this event, contact:

Sample Event Evaluation Questionnaire

Title of Event	County/City	Date
Name of Presenter		

		5. Rate each of these event components					
1. Rate the increase in your knowledge/skill of topics covered	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ None ✦ Some ✦ Substantial 	Poor	Below Average	Average	Above Average	Excellent	
2. Rate the level of content presented	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Too Basic ✦ About Right ✦ Too Advanced 	Presentation	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
3. Rate the applicability of the knowledge/skill acquired to your role as a parent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Not at All ✦ Moderately ✦ Very 	Quizzes/Discussions	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
4. Rate the time allowed for the event	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✦ Too Little ✦ About Right ✦ Too Much 	Video(s)	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
		Slides	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦
		Handouts	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦

5. Rate the presenter in the areas indicated below:						
		Below Poor	Average	Average	Above Average	Excellent
a. Knowledge of Material	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	Comments: _____ _____ _____ _____ _____
b. Responsiveness to Questions and Concerns	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	
c. Prepared and Organized	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	
d. Provided Constructive Feedback during Event	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	
e. Highlighted and Summarized Key Points	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	
f. Made Content Challenging and Interesting	✦	✦	✦	✦	✦	

Handout – Parent Exercise

Talking to Your Teen

Consider talking to your teen about cannabis. Here are 6 steps for how to discuss this topic in an effective way. What do you like about these steps? Can you see yourself using them?

I care about your health.

I see that you are using weed.

I feel concerned about this. Marijuana can harm your brain.

I will listen to your thoughts on this.

I want to discuss changes you can make to address my concerns.

I will support you in ways that I can. How can I help?

Handout – Parent Exercise

Below are 6 protective factors known to reduce the likelihood that a teen will use cannabis. Which ones are part of your parenting? Which are challenging?

- 1. Support your teen’s interests in healthy hobbies and extracurricular activities.**
- 2. Encourage your teen to have friendships with non-using peers.**
- 3. Communicate that you do not approve of your teen using drugs.**
- 4. Encourage your teen to succeed with school work.**
- 5. Participate in activities for the whole family.**
- 6. Be a good role model about your own legal substance use.**

Handout - Resources

Heather and Randy Bacchus lost their son to the devastating effects of cannabis induced psychosis. Their family tragedy provides a cautionary tale of what can happen when a teen uses high potency cannabis, and offers guidance and hope if a parent is faced with a teen who is using cannabis.

Visit their website to learn more:

<https://www.beextraordinarybeyou.com>

Other Suggested Websites

1. <https://teens.drugabuse.gov/parents>

Information from the National Institute on Drug Abuse aimed at parents about youth drug abuse, including ways to talk with your teen about cannabis and their effects.

2. <https://poppot.org/>

Parents Opposed to Pot counters the false narrative that cannabis is harmless by educating parents.

3. <https://momsstrong.org/>

Moms Strong is group of moms who tell their stories about how they saw cannabis severely damage their teenager or young adult.

Handouts - Resources

Other Suggested Websites (cont.)

4. <https://learnaboutsam.org/pan/>

The Parent Action Network was created with the belief many parents do not know that today's cannabis is harmful in ways not appreciated and that policy-makers need to be held accountable for making smart, science-based actions on the legalization of cannabis.

5. <https://johnnysambassadors.org/>

This resource aims to educate teens, parents, and communities about the dangers of today's high-THC cannabis on adolescent brain development, mental illness, and suicide.

6. Motivating Parents



This resource helps parents on how to talk with your son or daughter about cannabis and its potential harms.


Handout – Resources

(prepared by Sherburne County MN Prevention Coalition)


GET THE FACTS ABOUT MARIJUANA

Tips for Teens








1. Marijuana affects your brain.
Your brain is still developing until your mid-to-late 20s and marijuana can interfere with this development. Using marijuana can affect your memory, learning, concentration, and attention.




2. Marijuana limits your performance.
Marijuana affects timing, movement, and coordination, which can harm athletic performance and increase your risk of injuries.



3. Marijuana impairs driving.
Driving while impaired by any substance, including marijuana, is dangerous and illegal. Marijuana negatively affects several skills required for safe driving, like reaction time, coordination, and concentration.




4. Marijuana affects your mental health.
Regular marijuana use has been linked with depression, anxiety, and an increased risk of psychosis or schizophrenia.





5. Marijuana is addictive.
Because your brain is still growing, early use of marijuana is more likely to lead to addiction, compared to those who wait until they are adults. Research shows that 1 in 6 individuals who start using marijuana in their teens will become addicted to the drug. In addition, the amount of the main mind-altering chemical, THC, is considerably stronger than previous years, leading to higher rates of addiction and mental health concerns.

6. Life has many challenges.
Show others you're strong enough to face them without alcohol and other drugs. Learn how to cope in healthy ways at www.sherburnesupcoalition.org/studentresources.




7. Most teens are making healthy choices.
In a typical month, **most** students that attend a high school in Sherburne County **do not** use marijuana. When teens realize that not as many of their peers use as they thought, they are less likely to use.





8. Reach out for help.
No problem is too big or too small. There are numerous resources where you can get information and help. Talk with your school counselor, teacher, healthcare provider, or another trusted adult. Access a variety of community resources at www.stirmn.org/resources. Treatment can help you, a friend, or someone you love get back to the person you or they once were.

Scan for SUP Website



Sources: 2022 Minnesota Student Survey; Marijuana FactCheck; National Institute on Drug Abuse; Partnership to End Addiction; SAMHSA
This material was developed, in part, under grant #NH28CE002902 from ONDCP, CDC & HHS.



Handout – Resources

(prepared by Sherburne County MN Prevention Coalition)

PREVENTING UNDERAGE MARIJUANA USE *Talking Points for Parents*



TALK EARLY
TALK OFTEN

DID YOU KNOW? *Talk to your kids about the facts.*

MARIJUANA IS NOT A HARMLESS DRUG FOR TEENS.

The teen brain is still developing until the mid-to-late 20s and marijuana can interfere with this development. The amount of the main mind-altering chemical, THC, is considerably stronger than previous years, as it's been modified to have increased effects. Products popular with teen users like oils (in vape carts) and edibles often contain an average of 50% up to 90% THC. In contrast, leaf marijuana in the 1990's averaged 4% THC.

MARIJUANA IS LINKED TO SCHOOL FAILURE.

Marijuana has a negative effect on attention, concentration, learning, and memory. Regular use is linked to lower grades, increased absences, and a higher likelihood of dropping out of school.

TEENS ARE AT HIGHER RISK FOR ADDICTION.

Because the teen brain is still developing, early use of marijuana is more likely to lead to addiction, compared to those who wait until they are adults. Research shows that 1 in 6 individuals who start using marijuana in their teens will become addicted to the drug. In addition, the increasing strength of marijuana is leading to higher rates of addiction and mental health concerns.

MANY YOUNG PEOPLE DO NOT CONSIDER MARIJUANA USE A RISKY BEHAVIOR.

The good news – when teens know how drugs can harm them, their use goes down. The bad news – fewer students see marijuana use as risky. According to the 2022 MN Student Survey, Sherburne County students believe that people are least likely to be at risk of harm using marijuana, compared to the use of alcohol, prescription drugs, cigarettes, and e-cigarettes. Know the risks and teach your teens.

MOST TEENS ARE MAKING HEALTHY CHOICES.

Most Sherburne County students do not use marijuana. However, there is a significant disconnect between this reality and the perceptions of students. Students believe that more of their peers use than what is actually reported. This misconception can contribute to social pressures to use.

YOUR CHILD MAY ASK IF YOU HAVE USED MARIJUANA BEFORE.

A brief, honest answer may help the child feel comfortable talking with you about drug use issues. Try to avoid giving your child more information than they asked for. Rather, a general discussion of drug use scenarios may be more helpful. If you have never used marijuana, share why it didn't interest you.

YOU ARE ROLE MODELS FOR YOUR CHILDREN.

Be aware of how you use and talk about drugs in front of your kids. They learn by watching you.

YOU ARE THE MOST POWERFUL INFLUENCE IN YOUR CHILD'S LIFE.

Even when children reach their teen years, they still care about what parents say. If your teen knows you don't approve of drug use, they won't want to disappoint you. Talk early and often about the risks, set clear expectations and rules about drug use, and enforce reasonable consequences for breaking the rules. Visit the Sherburne County SUP website for additional resources to help start or continue conversations at www.sherburnesupcoalition.org.

YOU CAN TAKE ACTION IF YOU THINK YOUR TEEN IS USING MARIJUANA.

There are numerous resources, many right in your community, where you can take action if you think your teen is using marijuana. Consult your local school, healthcare facility, or community service organization. Access various community resources at www.stirmn.org/resources.

Scan for SUP Website



Sources: 2022 Minnesota Student Survey; Marijuana FactCheck; National Institute on Drug Abuse; Partnership to End Addiction; SAMHSA. This material was developed, in part, under grant #NH28CE002902 from ONDCP, CDC & HHS.