



Utah Sheriffs' Association

Marijuana Position Statement – 2017

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As Utah Law Enforcement, we do not claim to be drug experts. However, we do have time, knowledge, and experience with individuals suffering from drug abuse. We have seen some very sad and very real results of the abuse of drugs: Domestic violence, fractured families, loss of self-control searching for that next high, a multitude of crime and victims, pain, suffering, and death. We take the proposal to legalize this dangerous drug very seriously and encourage rational thought and sensible evidence-based action.

Regarding a host of important topics, our Utah Legislature is all about “Evidence Based Practices”. However, when it comes to tampering with marijuana, it appears willing to experiment with a proven dangerous drug. Surely, we know the proper process would be for marijuana to be re-scheduled after going through legitimate research and thorough scientific study and FDA approval. To that end, the National DEA Director has repeatedly asked for any scientific medical research or review to support re-scheduling marijuana. He continues to receive no credible medical research or evidence to support this re-classification.

We have all heard the claim that there is no intent to legalize recreational marijuana and that the proposal is for specific “medical conditions only”. This is the same claim that had been made in other states that have legalized marijuana for recreational use. Inevitably, “medical conditions” become “any chronic ache or pain”. What physician can tell you that you are not experiencing pain? We can learn from others’ mistakes. Society has spent millions of dollars in efforts to stop the use and treat the results of alcohol and tobacco abuse, yet we are considering adding the dangerous drug marijuana to those complex social issues.

We respect the counsel of the Utah Narcotics Officers Association. “So called medical marijuana in other states has become a farce and a sham. The average user of smoked medical marijuana has no chronic illness and is a white male in his mid-30s with a history of drug and alcohol abuse. . . In the last 20 years and due to market demand, constant genetic engineering has increased THC potency in marijuana plants, and extraction-concentration methods are becoming extremely popular and widespread. Marijuana is the 2nd leading cause of impaired driving arrests. One in six adolescents trying marijuana will become addicted.”

The New England Journal of Medicine reported these short and long term effects in both adolescents and adults:

- Impaired memory, difficulty learning and retaining information
- Addiction, Impaired motor coordination and altered judgement
- Paranoia, psychosis and schizophrenia
- Altered brain development, cognitive impairment and lower IQ
- Poor educational outcome, increased likelihood of dropping out of school
- Chronic bronchitis, diminished life satisfaction and achievement

The American Cancer Society “does not advocate the use of inhaled marijuana or the legalization of marijuana.” The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) “opposes the legalization of marijuana.” The American Medical Association (AMA) “does not endorse state based medical cannabis programs, the legalization of marijuana, or that scientific evidence on the therapeutic use of cannabis meets the current standards for a prescription drug product.”

Dr. Christian Thurstone, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Colorado and Medical Director of one of Colorado’s largest Adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment Programs states, “In the absence of credible data, this debate is being dominated by bad science and misinformation from people interested in using medical marijuana as a step to legalization for recreational use. Bypassing the FDA’s well-established approval process has created a mess that especially affects children and adolescents. Young people, who are clearly being targeted with medical marijuana advertising and diversion, are most vulnerable to developing marijuana addiction and suffering from its lasting effects.”

Dr. David Blodgett, South West Utah Public Health Department Director and Health Officer claims, “If marijuana truly does hold answers to health problems that have not been treatable before, we need to find that out using the scientific method instead of allowing political interests to hijack the issue as a smokescreen for recreational use.”

With marijuana, there is little legitimate scientific research. Should we in Utah be willing to engage in this dangerous social experiment with marijuana, particularly when we can clearly see the extremely damaging results of this experimentation in our neighboring state of Colorado?

Colorado has denounced any proclaimed windfall of revenue. They are spending big money on enforcement due to massive illegal grow operations disguised as legal grows. (Hiding in plain sight.) Thousands of pounds of illegal dope are being trafficked across America from “legal” grows in Colorado. Seizures of marijuana parcels in the U.S. Mail have increased 427%, while parcel size “weight” has increased 471%. The Utah Department of Public Safety reports that in 2014, there was a 592% increase in marijuana interdiction seizures across the country and those seizures were destined for 36 different states all grown in Colorado. “Experts” claim Utah “controlled” marijuana grows would be different than Colorado. Denver is losing visitors and valuable convention business due to the real or perceived concern of diminished safety. Colorado has 424 retail marijuana stores compared to 322 Starbucks and 202 McDonald’s.

Denver City District Attorney Mitchell Morrissey states, “In the city of Denver since the legalization of marijuana Denver Police Department is dealing with a 900% increase in the unlawful cultivation and manufacture of marijuana concentrate, and a 99% increase in unlawful distribution of marijuana and marijuana concentrate. The quantity of illegal marijuana seized by Denver Police has increased 3,424% on average per case. The volume of marijuana seized by Denver Police has increased from an average of 162 pounds to 5,724 pounds. Unlawful public consumption of marijuana citations has increased over 300%.” It

is reported that Colorado's homeless population has increased by well over 10,000 persons seeking easy access to feed their addiction.

District Attorney Mitchell continues, "Voters are being told that if they legalize marijuana in other states that crime will go down. The number of crimes in Denver has grown by about 44%. In 2015 in Denver alone crime rose in every neighborhood in the city. The murder rate hit a decade high, 1059 more cars were broken into, there were 903 more auto thefts, 321 more aggravated assaults and 231 more homes were broken into compared to 2014. Denver Police Department is busier enforcing marijuana laws and investigating crimes directly related to marijuana, including murders, robberies, and home invasions, than any other time in the history of the city. Voters considering legalizing marijuana are being told that doing so will free up law enforcement to work on other criminal activities. That has not been the case in Denver."

Marijuana is the #1 problem in Colorado schools. In school year 2015-16, 63% of all drug related school suspensions were for marijuana. 58% of all drug related school expulsions were for marijuana. 73% of all drug related school referrals to law enforcement were for marijuana violations. Youth past month marijuana use is 74% higher than the national average. Adult past month marijuana use is 104% higher than the national average and #1 in the nation. College age adults rank #1 in the nation for last month marijuana use. Hospitalization for marijuana use is up 81%. Emergency room visits have increased 122%. Marijuana related Fatal Traffic Accidents are up 48% since medical legalization and an additional 58% since recreational legalization. Since Colorado has legalized marijuana, marijuana-related Fatal Traffic Accidents in Utah have increased over 100%.

Colorado is spending big money to educate their kids who are suffering from the perception that dope-laced candy and other edibles are safe to consume. They are struggling with efforts to educate their young people to stay away from the life threatening use of this dangerous drug called Marijuana and its gateway to further drug abuse. Colorado and other medical and recreational use states have created thousands of new youth victims of marijuana on course to addiction and diminished life satisfaction and achievement. 68% of local Colorado jurisdictions have banned medical and recreational marijuana businesses.

Incredibly, we are seeing an increase in parental apathy in Utah toward marijuana legalization, disregarding its deadly effects. We have already seen marijuana use invade our Utah schools with the perception among Utah youth that marijuana use is okay because it is "medicine". High concentrate marijuana THC--known as "Dab"-- formed through a dangerous heat process using butane called "Hash Oil" has become prevalent among youth and adults. We have already seen our Utah youth graduate to more serious drug abuse such as butane hash oil, LSD, synthetic opioids, Meth, Heroin, deadly substance abuse combinations, sickness and death. We are already experiencing the deadly effects of marijuana use in Utah!

The natural man in all of us is subject to deception and rationalization. People, in general, marginalize danger. When we sell the belief that marijuana is not dangerous because it is legalized, we set our own loved ones up to fall prey to its deadly effects. A disturbing perception rising among adults is that marijuana use is okay. Quest is one of the nation's largest drug testing firms. In a recent report, their analysis indicated a 178% rise in positive marijuana tests in U.S. workplaces. Utah is poised to create thousands of victims to this dangerous drug and further the destruction of the family unit as its poisonous effects claims lives through addiction and family dysfunction.

Public Safety must be the #1 priority of government. Utah's elected leaders have a responsibility to do the right thing for our 3 million residents. Our focus needs to be on ALL of Utah's residents not just on the perceived or actual needs of a few, when the risk for so many is so great.

- 1) Utah Narcotics Officers Association "Facts about Marijuana"
- 2) Weber-Morgan Health Department "Medical Marijuana" 2/1/16
- 3) New England Journal of Medicine "Adverse Health Effects of Marijuana Use" June 5, 2014 and "Medical Marijuana's Public Health Lessons – Implications for Retail Marijuana in Colorado" March 12, 2015
- 4) David Blodgett, MD, MPH, South West Utah Public Health Department (SWUPHD) Director & Health Officer
- 5) Dr. Christian Thurstone, Professor of Psychiatry at the University of Colorado (Medical Director of one of Colorado's largest adolescent Substance Abuse Treatment Programs)
- 6) Utah Department of Public Safety "Public Safety Concerns Regarding Medical Marijuana"
- 7) The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado The Impact Volume 3
- 8) The Legalization of Marijuana in Colorado The Impact Volume 4
- 9) Quest "American Screening Corporation"
- 10) Mitchell R. Morrissey Denver District Attorney "No on 64 Campaign and SAM Action"