Marijuana: Know the Truth
Impacts of Legalization

Marijuana Potency
- Marijuana potency has risen from 4% in 1995 to 20% in 2015.¹
- New methods of processing marijuana have yielded extremely high potency extracts called wax, shatter, dabs, butane hash oil (BHO), or honey oil, with THC levels up to 80%.²
- Potent marijuana edibles increase the chance THC poisoning and going to the ER.³
- In 2018 vaping of marijuana has increased across grades 8th - 10th.⁴

Addiction
- 9% of people who try marijuana become addicted.⁵, ⁶, ⁷
- Marijuana addiction is 17% (or 1 in 6) for those who start using as a teen.⁵, ⁶, ⁷
- 20-50% of daily marijuana users become addicted.⁵, ⁶, ⁷

Physical Health Effects
- Like tobacco, marijuana smoke irritates the lungs causing breathing difficulties, chronic coughing, bronchitis, and pneumonia.²², ²³
- Marijuana use nearly doubles the risk of testicular cancer.²⁴

Mental Health Effects
- Marijuana stimulates the brain causing altered thinking, memory, brain development, hallucinations, and psychosis.⁸
- Adolescents with heavy marijuana use lose an average of 8-10 IQ points.⁹
- People with mental illness suffer an increase in depressed mood and anxiety when they use marijuana.¹⁰
- Marijuana induces anxiety, psychosis, and schizophrenia in those with no mental illness.¹⁰
- Youth who used marijuana 3 times or more by age 18 were more likely to have a depressive disorder at age 26.¹¹
- Marijuana use was significantly associated with worse recovery for depression and anxiety symptoms and mental health functioning compared with patients not using marijuana.¹²
- Daily adolescent users were 18 times more likely to become dependent on marijuana, 7 times more likely to attempt suicide and 8 times more likely to use other illegal drugs in the future.¹³
- People smoking marijuana before age 17 were 3.5 times more likely to attempt suicide than those who started smoking marijuana later in life.¹⁴

Marijuana and Opioid Use Vulnerability
- 90% of all addictions start in adolescence.¹⁵
- There is little evidence that marijuana reduces pain or the use of opioids.¹⁶
- Marijuana use increases the likelihood of opioid dependence.¹⁷
- Past year marijuana users are 3x more likely to misuse prescription opioids and 2x the chance of developing prescription opioid dependence.¹⁸
- Early use of marijuana reduces reactivity of the brain’s reward center in adulthood causing vulnerability to opioid and other drug addiction.¹⁹, ²⁰
- Marijuana prepares the brain for heightened responses to other drugs.²¹

References
Pregnancy
- Marijuana use while pregnant can cause harm to the baby including low-birth weight, developmental problems, attention and learning difficulties.  
- THC can be passed to the baby through breastfeeding.

Environment
- Devastating environmental impacts from marijuana cultivation include: endangering native animals and their habitats, toxic waste run-off, deforestation, noise and light pollution, diversion of water resources, human waste and garbage littering.
- Marijuana cultivation uses a large amount of critical resources. In California, cultivation accounts for over $5 billion worth of electricity usage annually.

Access and Availability
- “Big Marijuana” is a lucrative global industry that has followed the “Big Tobacco” playbook through marketing their products to youth and downplaying harms.  
- Marijuana dispensary density has been linked to an increase in youth use.
- As marijuana users and growers increase in a community, consumption among youth also increases.
- In states where recreational marijuana is legal, youths’ perception of harm from smoking marijuana is lowest.

Black Market
- Post-legalization, the black market continues to thrive in Colorado and other states. Postal service seizures of diverted Colorado marijuana increased 844%. Federal agencies have confiscated millions of dollars’ worth of illegal marijuana in rural forests, hills, and protected lands.

Crime
- In areas that have legalized marijuana, almost all have seen an increase in property and violent crimes.

Educational Disruption
- Marijuana use is consistently associated with reduced educational attainment (e.g., grades and chances of graduating).
- 86% of Colorado Student Resource Officers reported an increase in marijuana-related incidents after legalization, with 44% of those incidents relating to students under the influence during school hours.

Driving Risks
- Since recreational marijuana was legalized in Colorado, traffic deaths involving drivers who tested positive for marijuana more than doubled from 55 in 2013 to 138 people killed in 2017.
- The percentage of all Colorado traffic deaths that were marijuana related increased from 11.43 percent in 2013 to 21.3 percent in 2017.
- From 2010 through 2013, the estimated number and proportion of Washington State drivers involved in fatal crashes who had a detectable concentration of THC in their blood ranged from a low of 48 (7.9%) to a high of 53 (8.5%); the number and proportion both approximately doubled from 49 (8.3%) in 2013 to 106 (17.0%) in 2014.

References