

## Important Information for Parents

**Marijuana is being decriminalized on April 1, 2013.** What does this mean? Changing the possession of an ounce or less from a criminal to a civil offense does NOT mean that marijuana is a safe drug for adolescents.

If a minor (under the age of 18) is found in possession of an ounce or less of marijuana, it shall constitute a civil offense. For the first and second offenses, the offender will be liable to pay a fine of \$150 and will have to complete a court approved drug awareness program and community service. Failure to complete the course and/or pay the fine within one year of issuance will result in a fine of \$300 and doubles again to \$600 if it has not been paid within 90 days. A third offense within 18 months could result in a misdemeanor conviction punishable by up to 30 days in jail and/or a fine of up to \$500.

**Marijuana can be addictive** and those who use at a young age dramatically increase their chances of addiction. The young developing brain is more affected by drug use. One in six people will become addicted if they start using marijuana in their teens. This statistic goes down to one in eleven for people who start use at age 21 or older. The rates of addiction for teens using alcohol and other drugs are even higher. Marijuana is not a safe drug for young people to use. It is important for parents to know that **most (60% in RI, 65% Nationwide) high school students do not use marijuana.**

There is evidence from The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) that using marijuana affects learning, short term memory, problem solving, overall brain development and physical coordination. Marijuana use also impairs driving. Individuals are sometimes affected differently by drug use as everyone's genetic makeup and bio-chemistry is different. There is evidence that regular marijuana use during adolescence can increase the risk of developing schizophrenia and mood disorders (depression and anxiety). This could be caused by marijuana inhibiting communication across different parts of the brain that need to work together.

If you or your student(s) have questions, please contact your Student Assistance Counselor (SAC) \_\_\_\_\_ at \_\_\_\_\_. SAC's are specially trained to address issues related to preventing teen drug abuse and helping those students who are experiencing negative consequences from drug or alcohol use. The services offered by RISAS (Rhode Island Student Assistance Services) are confidential to students and parents.

Above the Influence page on marijuana: <http://www.abovetheinfluence.com/facts/drugsmarijuana>

Monitoring the Future 2012 Results: <http://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/trends-statistics/infographics/monitoring-future-2012-survey-results>