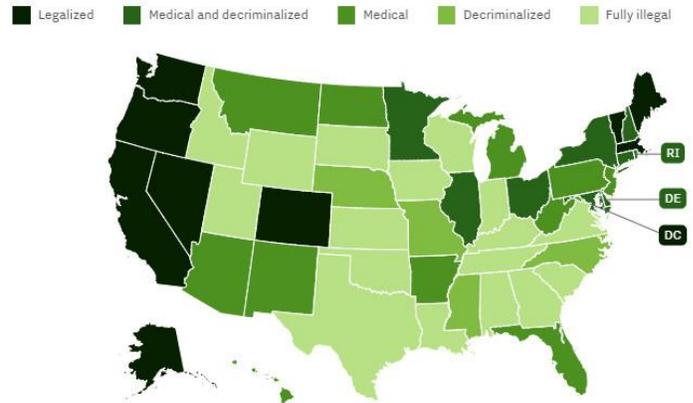




Marijuana laws in the US

Note: Vermont and Washington, DC, do not allow marijuana sales for recreational purposes.



Source: Marijuana Policy Project
Credit: German Lopez



LEGAL MARIJUANA AND PUBLIC HEALTH

IN STATES WHERE MARIJUANA IS LEGAL FOR ADULTS, HOW ARE ATTITUDES TOWARDS MARIJUANA CHANGING AND WHAT TYPES OF PUBLIC HEALTH MESSAGES ARE IMPORTANT?

Adult nonmedical marijuana use became legal in Washington State in 2012, and retail outlets opened in 2014. Three separate research projects at SDRG analyzed existing longitudinal data on changes over time in parents' knowledge and attitudes about marijuana use for their children; conducted focus groups with low-income parents and teens; and tested messages directed at parents and youth concerning marijuana use in the new context of legalization in Washington State.

Sample message tested in the 2014 focus group study

DR LESLIE WALKER of SEATTLE CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL



I'm Dr. Leslie Walker of Seattle Children's Hospital. In November of 2012 our state voted to legalize marijuana for recreational use. It is important that we all know what was approved. It is still illegal to use marijuana in public. Just like alcohol, it's illegal to use marijuana under the age of 21. And, just like alcohol, it's illegal to drive impaired by marijuana. That's the law.

Summary of Findings

Where marijuana is becoming legal for adults, state agencies should develop and broadly disseminate proactive public health campaigns with details about their state-specific laws.

Public health messages should:

- Explain details of the law, e.g., legal age, legal amount of possession, driving under the influence
- Provide links to further information
- Be publicized prior to the opening of retail outlets.

HERE'S WHAT WE FOUND:

STUDY 1: Parents in the longitudinal study (a gender-balanced, diverse sample of 395 parents) were becoming more accepting of and, for users, more frequently involved in marijuana use themselves. However, they remained widely opposed to teen marijuana use but need **facts** and **strategies** for talking with their children about marijuana.

STUDY 2: Focus groups with diverse, low-income groups of parents and teens suggested that **both parents and teens** needed **information** about the new retail marijuana law. The study found that teens are open to both information and guidance from parents **as long as it is calm and respectful**.

STUDY 3: Based on themes arising in the Study 2 focus groups, nine marijuana-focused messages were developed, then tested with a diverse group of 283 families (parents and teens) involved in a longitudinal parenting study in Tacoma, Washington. The messages fell into four categories: information about the law, general advice/conversation starters, consequences of marijuana use/positive alternatives, and information on potential harmful effects of teen marijuana use. Messages rated most highly were those providing information about the law, highlighting the need for informational health campaigns early in the marijuana legalization process. Targeting messages towards specific groups (e.g., marijuana users versus nonusers) might also be an effective strategy.

Youth rated messages about consequences coupled with positive alternatives highly **"I like that it focused on positive things and teens versus the bad things that can happen"** but tended to be skeptical of messages about the harmful effects of marijuana.

Both parents and teens gave highest ratings to messages with clear information about the law: legal age, public use, and driving under the influence. **"I had no idea it was illegal to drive after smoking. I thought DUI was only for drinking and driving."**

"It gives me a reminder to talk to my kids about it, and also opens the doors to discussion if we see the ad together."

- Focus group parent referring to learnaboutmarijuanawa.org poster suggesting conversation starters



For additional information on this topic, please refer to the original articles.

Study 1: Kosterman, R., Bailey, J. A., Guttmanova, K., Jones, T. M., Eisenberg, N., Hill, K. G., & Hawkins, J. D. (2016). Marijuana legalization and parents' attitudes, use, and parenting in Washington State. *Journal of Adolescent Health, 59*(4), 450-456.*

Study 2: Skinner, M. L., Haggerty, K. P., Casey-Goldstein, M., Thompson, R. W., Buddenberg, L., & Mason, W. A. (2017). Focus groups of parents and teens help develop messages to prevent early marijuana use in the context of legal retail sales. *Substance Use and Misuse, 52*(3), 351-358.**

Study 3: Hanson, K., Haggerty, K. P., Fleming, C. B., Skinner, M. L., Casey-Goldstein, M., Mason, W. A., Redmond, C., & Thompson, R.W. (2018). Washington State retail marijuana legalization: Parent and adolescent preferences for marijuana messages in a sample of low-income families. *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs, 79*(2), 309-317.**

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