

# Non-Medical Cannabis Use

## Supporting Public Health in Adapting to Legal, Non-Medical Cannabis Program Summary



### OVERVIEW

THERE IS GROWING RECOGNITION of the need for the public health field to plan for the legal, non-medical use of cannabis. In the 20 years since California enacted its compassionate use law, all but four states have legalized medical use of some form of cannabis, and eight states and the District of Columbia have legalized non-medical use. At the start of 2016, non-medical use of cannabis was legal in states with just under 4 percent of the U.S. population. But with successful ballot initiatives for non-medical use, that figure has quickly shifted to states with over 21 percent of the population.

National estimates of non-medical cannabis use have remained stable or increased since 2002, while estimates of perceived great risk have decreased. Perhaps most troubling, the public health risks of cannabis use are still not well-understood. The gap between federal and state policy is also a challenge to states that allow non-medical use of cannabis: federal policy limits funding for research, and without evidence of health effects, the development of standards in product testing, laboratory procedures, data collection and law enforcement is difficult. In light of increased non-medical use of cannabis and the rapidly shifting political landscape, there is an urgent public health need to understand the health effects and public health policy challenges presented by cannabis.

### DEVELOPING RESOURCES TO INFORM AND SUPPORT PUBLIC HEALTH PRACTITIONERS

The American Public Health Association is working to identify emerging policy gaps around cannabis legislation. Specifically, APHA has developed a table that shows how states that have legalized non-medical use of cannabis are developing regulations to protect public health. This resource includes information on possession, production, promotion, prevention, potency, purity and

price. It will serve as a quick reference for policymakers interested in learning about the range of cannabis policies in effect across the country.

### COLLABORATING TO RAISE AWARENESS OF PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES PRESENTED BY CANNABIS LEGALIZATION

APHA also serves on a workgroup with public health partners convened by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention that works on production safety, testing lab standards and procedures, the capacity of regulators to respond to the latest science, impaired driving guidance for law enforcement, and other emerging policy issues posed by the legal use of cannabis. At its Annual Meetings, APHA collaborates with CDC and other partners to host sessions on cannabis policy and will continue to raise awareness of the public health issues presented by legalization.

### CONTACT

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