



**When It Comes to
Marijuana Policies**

We Must Do More to Protect Kids

August 2021



The Problem: Laws and regulations have failed to keep up with today's high THC products

THEN



Before 2000,
THC Potency in Marijuana
was under 5%

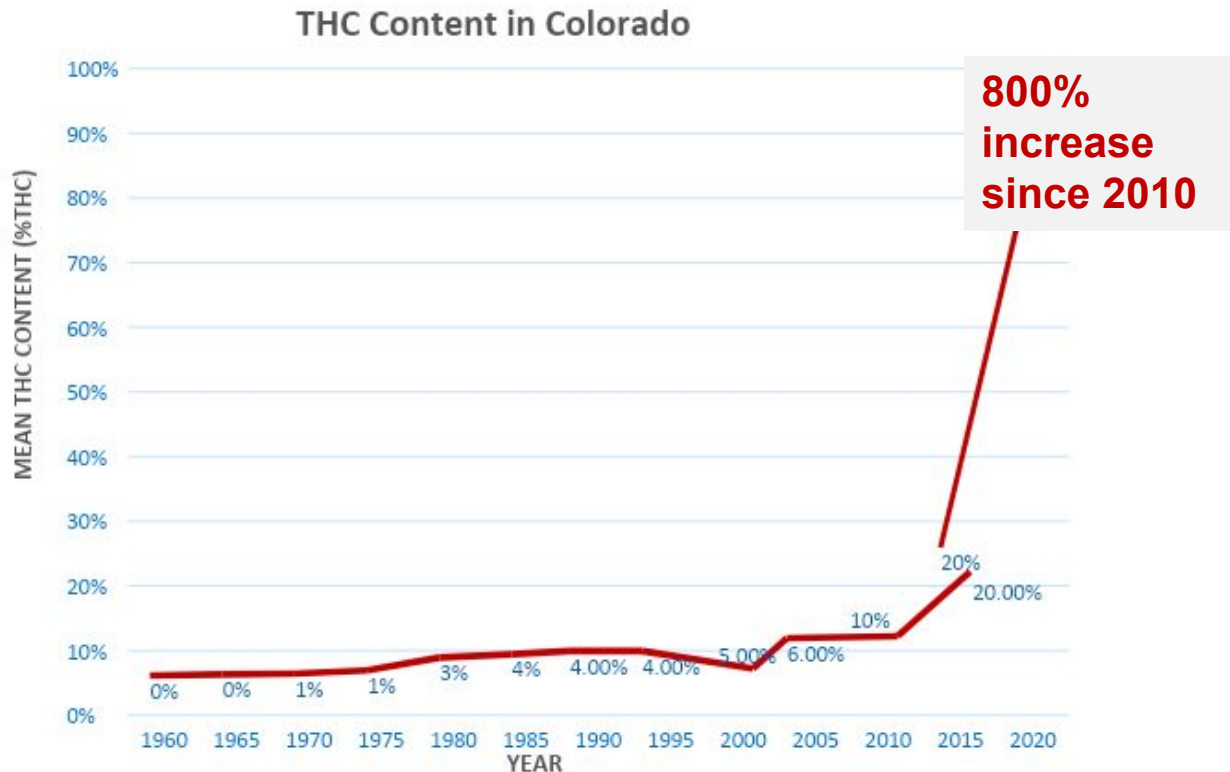
NOW



Today, THC potency in
products like shatter can
exceed 90% THC



Commercialization has led to massive increases in THC potency



Mahmoud A. Elsohly (2014) Potency Monitoring Program, Supported by NIDA (years 1960-2015), and Colorado Department of Health and Environment, *THC Concentration in Colorado Marijuana* (year 2020)

2019

90% THC in Concentrates

2006

8.5% THC

2000

5% THC | NO concentrates

1997

4.5% THC

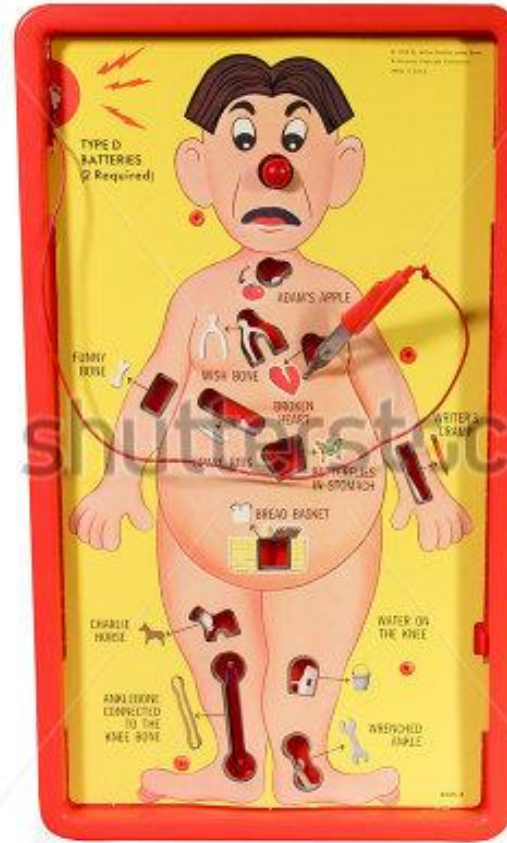
1960-80

Less than 2% THC

Multiple studies show serious problems with high THC: **addiction, psychosis, depression, anxiety, sleep problems, suicide, violence.**

High THC products that now come in new and radically different forms and products

- › Eye drops
- › Nasal sprays
- › Smoking, vaping, dabbing
- › Eating
- › Drinking
- › Inhalers
- › Topical body products
- › Lubricants
- › Suppositories



Products can appear deceptively benign and attractive to youth



Kids believe they are safe

because these products are aggressively marketed and sold as medicine



Colorado young people
have significantly
increased their use of
dabbing, vaping and
edibles since 2015.

JAMA Pediatrics 2019;173:988-989 Colorado Healthy Kids Survey, 2019

Who we are: Parents who came together after marijuana was legalized for adult recreational use in Colorado in 2012

- › Formed nonpartisan non-profit organization when Governor's task force determining marijuana regulatory framework ranked public health and safety and protecting kids last priority and ease for marijuana consumer #1 priority
- › Since then, our education and policy efforts have been endorsed by three of Colorado's still living ex-Governors both Republicans and Democrats. And through the support & engagement of many thousands of citizens (over 8,000 members) and key community stakeholders and elected officials, we've impacted over 23 pieces of marijuana legislation



Nine-year track record of securing important youth safeguards

These safeguards include:

- Product testing, labeling, and packaging including THC and CBD potency and warnings
- Required edible markings and serving size and package limits
- Pregnancy warnings at point of sale
- Data collection on youth impacts
- Funding for education and research including THC Potency Study
- Advertising limits and youth local restrictions
- Important delivery and on-site club restrictions

2021: GROUNDBREAKING POLICY CHANGE

- Lead proponent in landmark CO marijuana safeguards bill
 - Limit THC concentrate daily sales
 - Increase data collection & mandatory consumer warning handout
 - Adopt real-time medical marijuana tracking system
 - Hold physicians accountable by treating medical marijuana like other medicines
- Secured \$2M federal appropriation to study effects of THC on adolescents & perinatal women
- Marijuana Free Zone expansion -- reached 200,000 kids & families
- Selected to State Marijuana Enforcement Division Work Group to implement policy of landmark regulations bill
- Expanded engagement and outreach to all 50 states

2020: EXPANSION OF LESSONS LEARNED

- Rebrand Smart Colorado to One Chance To Grow Up
- Meetings with 50+ US Congress members/staffers
- Meetings with nearly 70% of Colorado legislators educating about harms
- Driving force behind first ever Colorado "High Potency Workgroup"
- Outreach and engaged supporters in 25 states
- Skip It! Campaign: educated 2,500 officials and 150 chambers of commerce
- Selected to Denver workgroup to advocate for kids safeguards for clubs/marijuana delivery
- Educated 100 CO Marijuana Enforcement Division staff

2019: MORE SAFEGUARDS

- Secured law for mandatory dispensary THC warnings for pregnant women
- Secured law permitting limits on THC and products
- Required on-site education: THC potency/impairment
- No pot delivery under 21/no college campuses
- Promote Marijuana Free Zones
- Community forums/professional organization engagement on impacts to kids

2018: EDUCATION

- Launched THCphotos.org
- Stopped pot delivery and on-site use
- Wide dissemination of education kits
- Published white paper & research
- Sunset review analysis & report
- Supported sales of FDA-approved CBD
- Expanded THC education

2017: SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Secured 150 new school health professionals
- Created marijuana resource education bank
- Home grow plant count reduced from 99 to 12
- Stricter local control: limit licenses & hours
- Blocked social consumption clubs

2016: THC POTENCY

- Secured research on THC
- Limits on marijuana candy
- More home grow protections for kids
- THC & CBD potency labeling
- Separation of High-THC products in store
- Medical marijuana advertising limits

2015: THC MARKING

- Preserved CO youth health survey & data collection
- Banned THC sprayed pre-made foods
- Funding youth prevention
- THC labeling & universal symbol
- Blocked repeal of THC marking

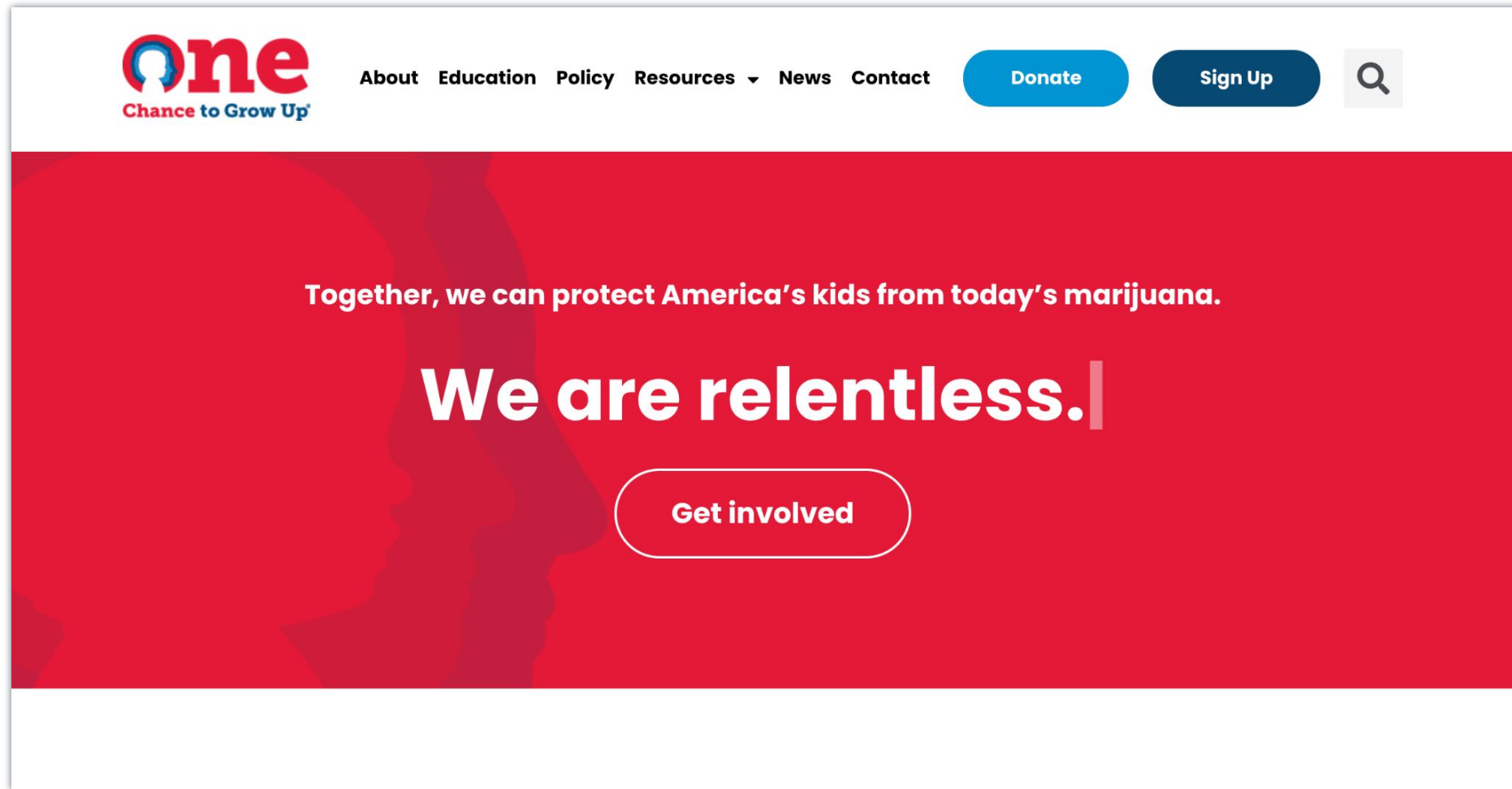
2014: POTENCY AWARENESS

- Appointed by Governor to Education Committee
- Monitoring of commercialization impacts
- Marking edibles to identify THC
- Required THC potency study
- Limiting servings & package amounts
- Securing education funding

2013: INITIAL PROTECTIONS

- Product testing, labeling, warnings
- Childproof packaging
- Data collection, reporting requirements
- Advertising & marketing restrictions
- Establish health department monitoring committee

2020: Launched One Chance To Grow Up to share what we've learned



Not all marijuana is the same – and shouldn't be treated the same from an education and policy perspective

- Funding for 150 on-site school behavioral health specialists
- Marijuana resource bank (free access for all CO schools)
- Data collection on endangerment, suspicious youth deaths, & accidents
- Reduce Denver hours from proposed 12pm to 10pm
- Helped secure stricter rules around open social use in Denver



CAN YOU SPOT  IN TODAY'S POT?

THC potency gaps even exist in Farm Bill including Delta 8 & 10

(Below are vape pens and Delta-8 THC products)



Public and Policy Misperceptions Persist

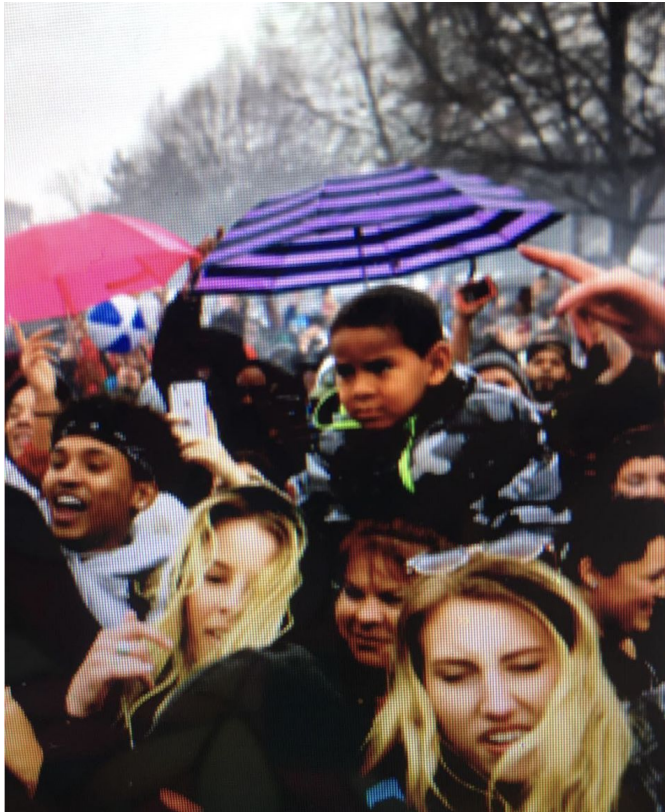
Big differences between
Decriminalization/Legalization

VS

Full-blown profit-driven
Commercialization



Commercialization is harming kids, and disproportionately hurts neighborhoods of color, creating new inequities

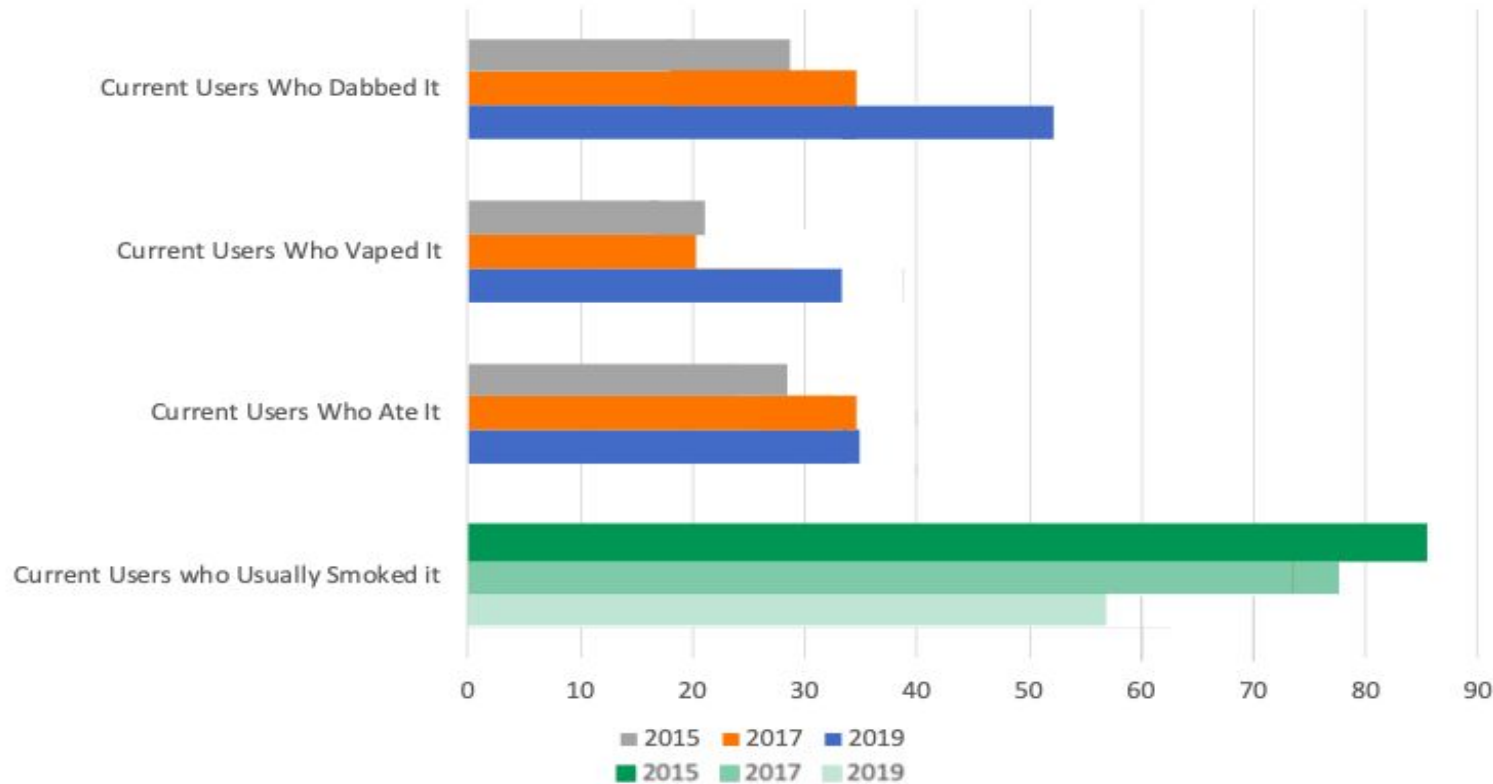


- Photo taken at local park in Denver during one of the many 420 celebrations
- Commercial grows, THC manufacturing facilities, and dispensaries are often concentrated in neighborhoods already facing multiple serious inequities including poverty

Rising THC potencies are a threat to growing brains (which are developing into the mid-20s)

Marijuana Ultra Potent Concentrate Youth Use Trends

2015-2019 - Colorado



- High school students now report—usual method of use as dabbing concentrated THC—at rates nearly 3 times higher than adults
- Significant increase in number of kids reporting using 20-30 times per month
- High-school aged youth are twice as likely to drive after using marijuana than after using alcohol

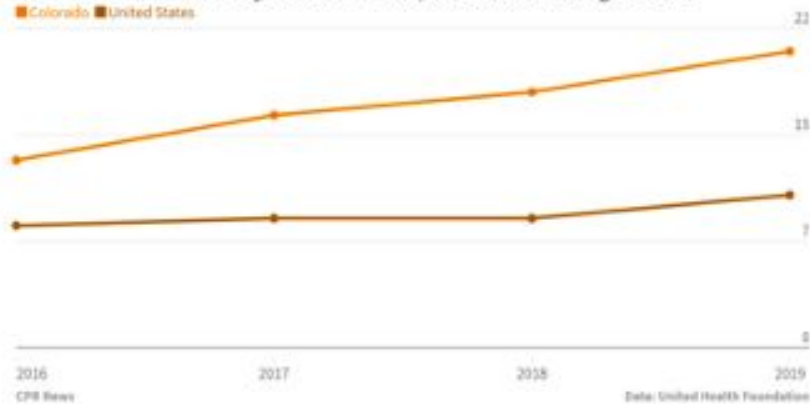
Teen Deaths By Suicide: Marijuana is #1 substance in toxicology screens

The Rate Of Teen Suicide In Colorado Increased By 58% In 3 Years, Making It The Cause Of 1 In 5 Adolescent Deaths

By John Daley | September 17, 2019

The Number Of Deaths By Suicide Per 100,000 Adolescents Ages 15-19

Colorado United States

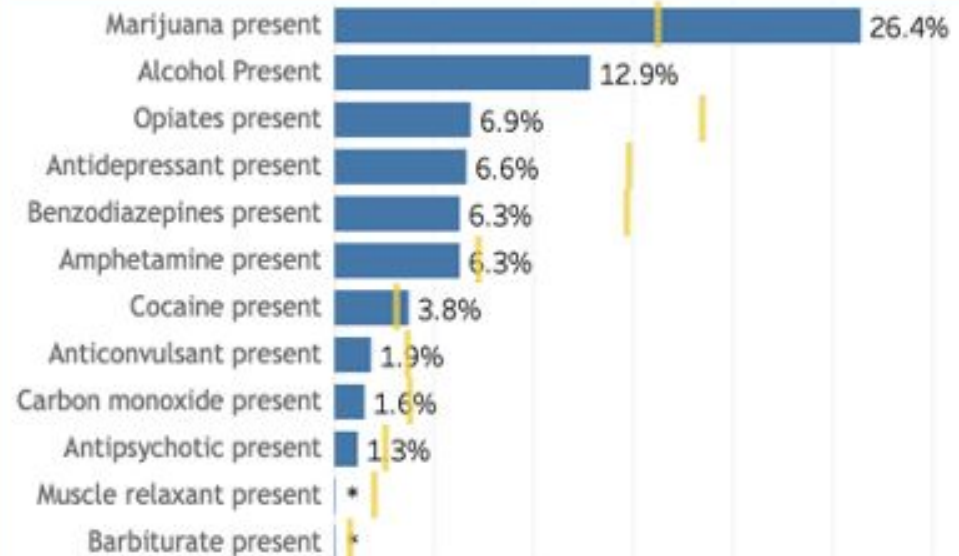


Colorado had the highest increase in the teen suicide rate in the U.S. since 2016.

That's according to a new report by the United Health Foundation, which ranks each state for the health of its women and children.

Dr. Linda Genen, the group's chief medical officer for women's health, said Colorado's teen suicide rate increased 58 percent from 2016 to 2019, but the reason is unclear.

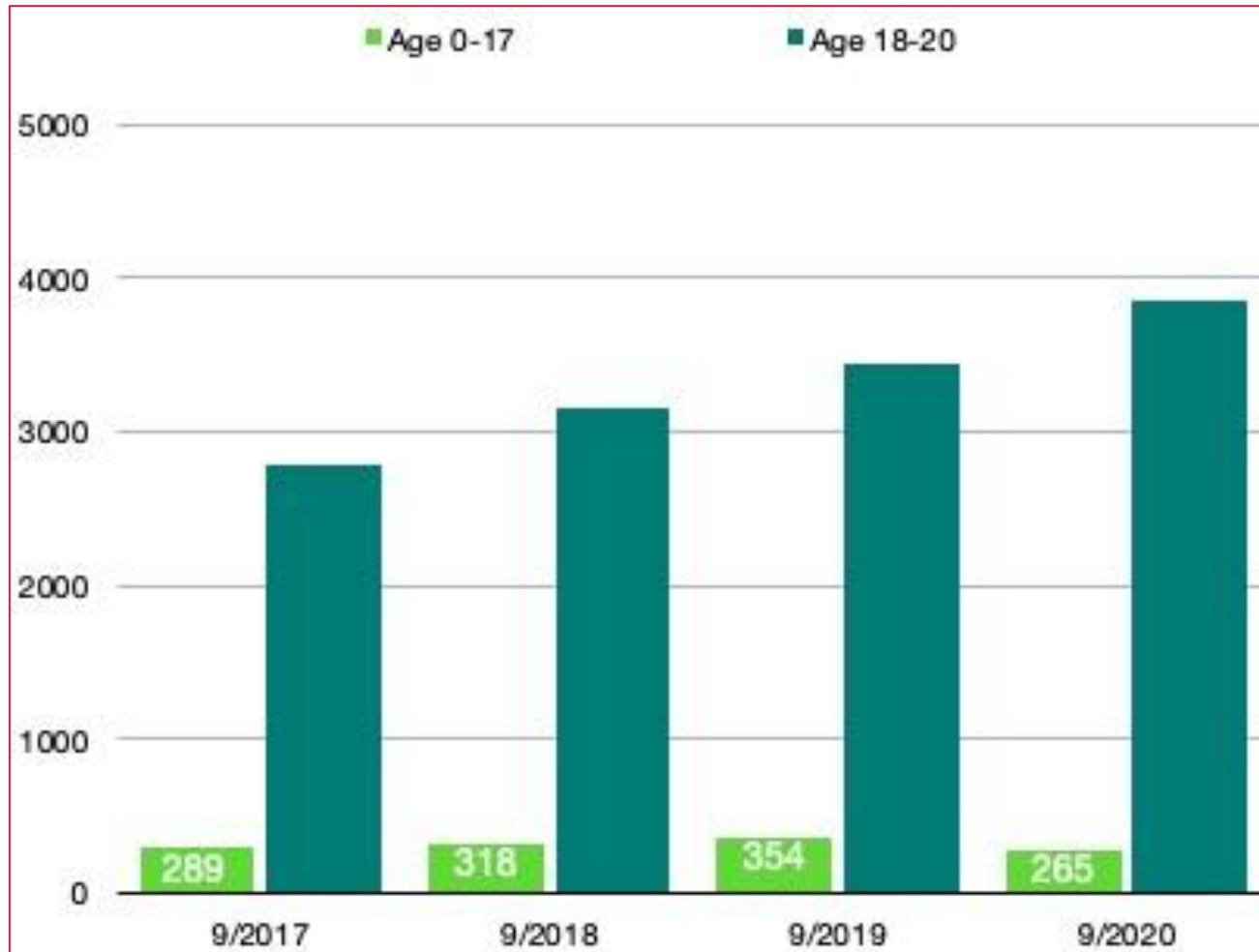
Marijuana #1 Substance Found in Tox Screens



More Impacts Include:

- › The number of vehicle fatalities where marijuana was found in a driver's system increased 153% between 2013 and 2017. 2018 survey of marijuana users: 69% said they had driven under the influence of marijuana at least once in past year—27% admitted driving high almost daily
- › Survey of 400 dispensaries (both medical and recreational) found 69% were recommending marijuana to pregnant women when any amount of THC can be harmful for babies
- › Emergency departments are reporting more kids and adults in crisis from these extremely high THC products w/some calling it a “public health crisis”

Adults w/medical marijuana cards decreasing
while 18-20 year olds w/medical marijuana cards increasing
(83% report severe pain as their qualifying condition)



School officials report this
has created a pipeline of
high THC products to high
schoolers

Young Adults ages 18–25 at Highest Risk

(our nation's future leaders and workers)

- › Highest marijuana-consuming population
- › Nearly double the nationwide average
- › Most likely to be unsafe while high
- › 1 in 3 are consuming marijuana regularly
- › 1 in 7 are consuming marijuana DAILY

Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) data, 2019
Colorado Department of Health and Environment

Enough marijuana oil to get an entire Colorado high school high. Say NO to high-potency pot.



Why it matters:

High-potency THC linked with a tripled risk for psychosis

Study analyzed 780 people ages 18–65,
410 with first-episode psychosis and 370 healthy controls

In same study low potency (less than 5%) showed no risk for psychosis

HIGH-POTENCY THC (15% THC or more) **3X** INCREASED RISK OF PSYCHOSIS

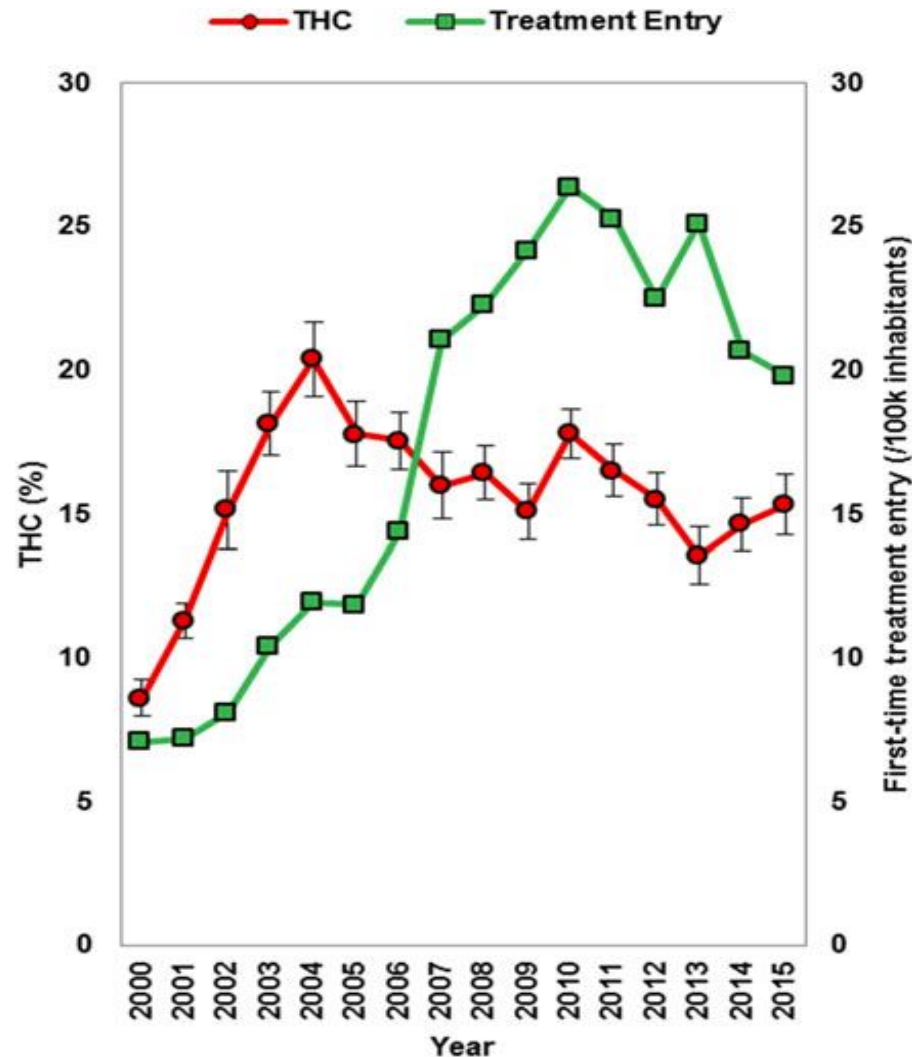
DAILY USE (15% THC or more) **5X** INCREASED RISK OF PSYCHOSIS

Multiple other studies show serious problems with high THC amounts: addiction, psychosis, depression, anxiety, sleep problems, suicide and violence

European Health Experts Concluded: THC Potencies above 15% Should Be Considered A Hard Drug

After the Dutch observed negative impacts from rising THC potencies, a team of health experts concluded that **THC potencies above 15% should be considered a hard drug, like cocaine.**

Laar MV et al. Limitations to the Dutch cannabis toleration policy, assumptions underlying the reclassification of cannabis above 15% THC. In J Drug Policy 2016;34:58-64.



Changes in cannabis potency and first-time admissions to drug treatment: A 16-year study in the Netherlands
Freeman TP et al.
Psychological Medicine 2018

Fig. 1. Mean (95% CI) concentrations of δ -9-tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in domestic herbal cannabis and first-time cannabis admissions to specialist drug treatment (per 100 000 inhabitants) from 2000 to 2015.

The Path Forward:

- › We've never weighed in on the legalization-of-marijuana fight around the country because we formed after legalization
- › Our laser focus remains on demanding that safeguards be put in place to protect kids
- › While there remains many uncertainties – what we do know is there is a big difference between low THC and CBD products and today's radically different high THC products and strains
- › Different levels of legalization are taking place throughout the country, which is why it is imperative more is done to protect kids



Urgent Action is Needed

High Priority Policy Recommendations

- › More research on impact of high THC products so policymaking can be guided by the science (allow federal govt to research)
- › Dedicate funds for robust education and prevention for youth and perinatal women
- › Collect key data to assess benefits and harms and to determine best practices and regulatory measures
- › Address THC potency gaps in Farm Bill (including Delta 8 and 10)



High Priority Policy Recommendations continued

- › Treat medical marijuana more like a medicine by requiring prescribing recommendations that specify THC potency and amounts, product type, intake method and timeframe
- › Prohibit kid friendly products including flavors and strictly limit advertising and marketing, and address false claims
- › Cap THC potency and require standard serving sizes and limits per package
- › Require childproof packaging and full disclosures, including potential risks on labels and at point of sale

Important 2021 Colorado Legislation

- › Bill passed overwhelmingly in the House and unanimously in Senate w/strong bipartisan support to reign in negative impacts
- › Signed into law by Governor Polis
- › 50 Colorado organizations signed on in support including state's largest school districts, Children Hospital Colorado and other health care organizations, and youth-serving nonprofits from across the state
- › More than 100 people testified in favor, including parents telling harrowing stories of how high-THC marijuana products hurt their kids.

Bill highlights include:

- › Potency research review and additional regulatory measures to be determined by University of Colorado, School of Public Health and scientific review committee
- › Adoption of a medical marijuana tracking system that treats medical more like a medicine and required training for doctors recommending
- › Required toxicology and data collection for all suicides ages 25 and under
- › Reduction of daily purchase limit of marijuana concentrates for 18-20 yr olds
- › Education at point of sale about concentrated THC products

Thank you!

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The stakes are high

Our nation's youth are
counting on us



OneChanceToGrowUp.org