

State Health, Welfare Poses Position Paper On Marijuana Use

(First of Three Parts)

THE STATEMENT OF THE ALASKA DEPARTMENT OF
HEALTH AND WELFARE ON A PUBLIC HAZARD

Preamble

One preventive role of the Department of Health and Welfare is to inform citizens in advance about dangers to their physical health, mental health and general welfare. This includes, but is not limited to, such problems as epidemics, frostbite, fire prevention, earache, hunger, fever, poisoning, water pollution, ice safety, venereal disease, misuse of alcohol, use of tobacco and drugs and a host of other real and potential health problems.

An increase in misuse of the drug marijuana by young Alaskans necessitates the following Position Statement which is based on a convincing body of scientific reports as well as empirical knowledge of well informed experts in this field:

POSITION STATEMENT

There are conflicting reports about marijuana, but research of late indicates that marijuana is deceptively dangerous.

The Alaska Department of Health and Welfare is unequivocally against the human intake of the unstable drug cannabis sativa, cannabis-indica, cannabis americana, marijuana, marihuana, pot, hemp, Indian hemp, rope, Mary Jane, weed, grass, Texas tea, muggers, jive, reffers, dagga, boo, loco weed, kif, bhang, ganja, ma-jen, charas, Mary Warner, diamba, maconha, sticks, joints, hay, hashish, cannibidol, tetrahydro-cannabinol or any derivatives thereof.

The Department of Health and Welfare is an agency of an orderly public created by the will of the citizens of the Great State of Alaska. The Departmental mission is to contribute to the health and welfare of a wholesome society, and it cannot condone, encourage or abet any form of health hazard, disorder, questionable influence or risk which accompanies common marijuana usage.

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Marijuana Use . . .

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To remain silent at a time when a warning is needed would be dereliction of duty. A marijuana user is engaging in a risky activity, hazardous to health and society. The danger to mental health from guilt complexes caused by use of marijuana, contrary to law, is another factor yet undetermined.

Marijuana may influence a user to try other drugs. It may cause auto accidents, loss of ambition, or lower a user's achievement. The time-distance unpredictability syndrome alone is frightening.

Uncontrolled use of marijuana cannot be viewed as an innocent pastime. The Department of Health and Welfare is opposed to the efforts of the ill-informed or the non law-abiding segments of society who mislead and encourage children, youth, or adults to indulge in a highly questionable drug, which has been considered by many experts to be detrimental in physical, mental, and moral aspects.

Alcohol is more of a problem than we have been able to handle. We have never controlled it properly—as a look at auto fatalities directly attributable to alcohol will show. If our society were to allow introduction of marijuana with its recognized potential of inducing instability the question arises: Can we afford it from the tax-paying, financial standpoint? Can we risk the cost of overfilled prisons, mental institutions and other medical institutions, even if we do not consider the loss in human dignity and self respect?

There is a similarity between the SHORT-TIME effects of marijuana and the effects of alcohol. Marijuana smokers use this similarity in attempting to justify marijuana smoking. To condone one danger merely because it apparently compares with another, of tragic proportions, and worse, is irrational, myopic and specious.

As an indication of the uncertainty and lack of knowledge available on marijuana and its unpredictability, and for those who minimize the problem of marijuana, here are a few pertinent questions which have not yet been answered:

What are the full effects of marijuana on the brain?

Effects on children born of marijuana users?

Number or percentage of marijuana users who turn to hard drugs?

Number or percentage of marijuana users involved in serious crimes?

Climatic and altitude influence on behavior of marijuana users?

Relation of body chemistry to varied behavioral reactions to marijuana or why behavior is unpredictable even with the same person in apparently the same surroundings?

Results of marijuana in influencing antisocial, immoral or physically dangerous suggestions to actually be performed.

Number of auto accidents caused by persons under the influence of marijuana?

Effect on nervous systems of chronic and occasional users?

How are the variables encountered in experiments on marijuana to be controlled?

The entire range of unpredictable behavior on the part of marijuana users?

Complete knowledge in these areas has not yet been obtained. Following are additional reasons why the Alaska Department of Health and Welfare warns against the use of marijuana.

(NEXT: Continual users.)