

Montana Alliance of Prevention



ADVOCACY TOOLKIT

Are you interested in advocating for the health and wellbeing of Montanans, but not sure where to begin? This toolkit will give you an overview of what it means to advocate on the issue of marijuana, and how to do so effectively.





Table of Contents

2 **What is Advocacy?**

3 **Information on Marijuana**

4 **Strategize**

5 **Take Action**

6 **References**

7 **Acknowledgements**



What is Advocacy?

ad·vo·cate

verb

publicly recommend or support.
"they advocated for their cause"

Data is an incredibly important factor in making changes, especially when it comes to things like policy. However, the numbers do not always share a complete story.

This is where you, yes, **YOU** come in to make the biggest impact by lifting your voice and sharing your story.

DATA + STORIES = CHANGE



**“Advocacy is empathy,
compassion and
community at work.”**

- Janna Cachola



Information on Marijuana

POTENCY

Prior to the 1990s, THC (the psychoactive component of marijuana) made up less than 2% of the marijuana plant. Today, THC content is near 17-28% of the marijuana plant and some products such as edibles, oil, shatter, or dabs may have around 95% THC content.¹

HEALTH OUTCOMES

Short term: altered senses and sense of time, mood changes, impaired movement, difficulty thinking/problem solving, impaired memory, delusions, hallucinations, psychosis, and more.²

Long term: Problems with brain development, worsening symptoms of schizophrenia, issues with child development during and after pregnancy, intense nausea and vomiting (Cannabinoid Hyperemesis Syndrome), and more.²

YOUTH

Teenage marijuana use is at its highest level in over 30 years, with today's teens consuming more marijuana than tobacco. Despite marijuana being legal for adult use in some states, adolescent marijuana use is NOT legal in any state.³





Strategize

1. Identify Relationships

Who do you already know working in law or who do you know that can connect you to these people? You don't always have to start at the top! Get connected and build relationships with assistants or newly elected legislators.

2. Research

Learn more about the legislators. What is their background? Do they have prior experience working with policy regarding marijuana? This will help you understand the best approach to take when talking with them.

3. Make your "Ask"

Once you have developed a relationship with your legislators, decide what you would like to advocate for. Identify the issue and learn more about it. Prevention is the best way to avoid substance use consequences, yet prevention efforts often receive little focus. Read below for tips on being heard.

Some things to keep in mind:

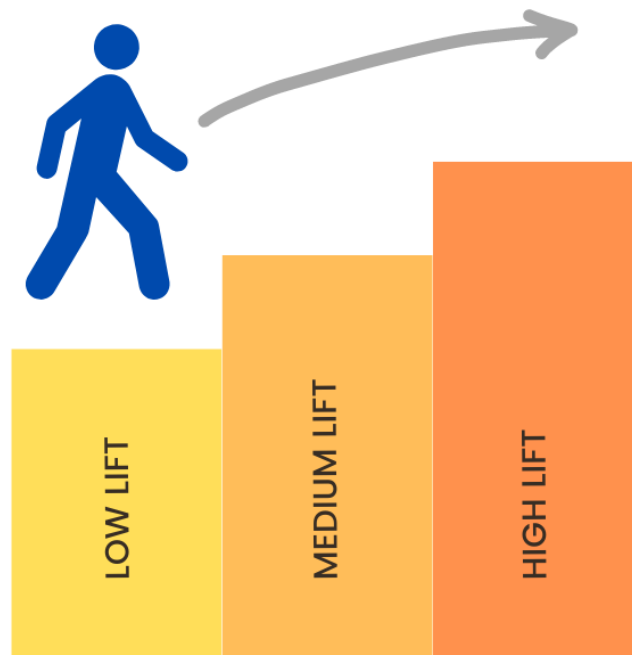
- ✓ **Be clear.**
- ✓ **Be respectful.**
- ✓ **Keep it short.**
- ✓ **Come together in groups.**
- ✓ **Share your personal story along with key facts.**
- ✓ **Follow up after the meeting.**
- ✓ **Be a resource!**





Take Action

There is a role for you in advocacy! You don't have to have tons of extra time to get involved. Check out some low, medium, and high lift examples to see where you might best fit.



Low lift (less time commitment)

Utilize social media.
Sign an action alert.

Medium lift (more time commitment)

Attend a town hall meeting.
Call or write a letter to your representative.

High lift (most time commitment)

Attend a meeting with your representative or their staff.



References

1. Stuyt E. (2018). The Problem with the Current High Potency THC Marijuana from the Perspective of an Addiction Psychiatrist. *Missouri medicine*, 115(6), 482–486.
2. NIDA. 2019, December 24. Cannabis (Marijuana) DrugFacts. Retrieved from <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugfacts/cannabis-marijuana> on 2023, August 2
3. American Academy of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry. (2019, October). Marijuana and Teens. www.aacap.org.
https://www.aacap.org/AACAP/Families_and_Youth/Facts_for_Families/FFF-Guide/Marijuana-and-Teens-106.aspx



Acknowledgements

This toolkit was developed by Morgan Neavill, M.S. under the Mountain Plains Prevention Technology Transfer Center (MP-PTTC) 2022-2023 Prevention Fellowship Program funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).

Please note the views expressed in this product do not necessarily represent the views, policies, or positions of SAMHSA or the PTTC.



Mountain Plains (HHS Region 8)

PTTC

Prevention Technology Transfer Center Network

Funded by Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration