



Why the American Academy of Pediatrics Supports Decriminalizing Cannabis

“The AAP strongly supports the decriminalization of marijuana use for both minors and young adults and encourages pediatricians to advocate for laws that prevent harsh criminal penalties for possession or use of marijuana.”

— American Academy of Pediatrics

Questions about decriminalizing cannabis, answered by the American Academy of Pediatrics’ 2015 report *The Impact of Marijuana Policies on Youth: Clinical, Research, and Legal Update*

Doesn’t decriminalizing marijuana result in higher use rates by minors?

“Decriminalization of recreational use of marijuana by adults has also not led to an increase in youth use rates of recreational marijuana.” (11)

How many young adults are impacted by criminal penalties for possession or use of marijuana?

“Currently, criminal prosecution for marijuana possession by teenagers and young adults adversely affects almost 400,000 youth a year in the United States.” (10)

Does this issue impact all minors equally?

“The majority of arrests for marijuana possession occur among adolescents and young adults; these arrests disproportionately affect young men and boys, particularly young black men and boys.” (10)

What are the consequences of a marijuana offense for a minor?

“A criminal record can have lifelong negative effects on an adolescent who otherwise has had no criminal justice history. These effects can include ineligibility for college loans, housing, financial aid, and certain kinds of jobs.” (586)

What are the implications of imprisonment for young adults who are convicted?

“Imprisonment represents direct removal of a person from needed roles in society: adults away from jobs, parents from young children, and adolescents from school and their families. Furthermore, these people are placed in environments where they are likely to have close contact with people who have committed serious violent offenses or are repeat offenders.” (10)

Does current evidence support prosecuting minors for marijuana offenses?

“Current evidence does not support a focus on punishment for youth who use marijuana. . . . [D]ecriminalizing simple possession of marijuana for both minors and young adults may be a reasonable alternative to outright criminal prosecution.” (11)