



# Youth Cannabis Use and Access

Annie Carver

Staff Attorney

Legal Resource Center for Public Health Policy - Cannabis



# Introduction

- Review data related to youth cannabis use in Maryland
- Compare Maryland's experience with other, relevant national youth cannabis use data
- Discuss the health effects of cannabis
- Examine legal prohibitions on youth use and possession of cannabis and provisions in place to deter youth use
- Explore the issue of hemp and hemp-derived products
- Review resources on speaking with teenagers about cannabis

*References with hyperlinks are included at the end of the presentation; specific citations may be found in the slideshow notes, which will be made available after the training.*





# Youth Use

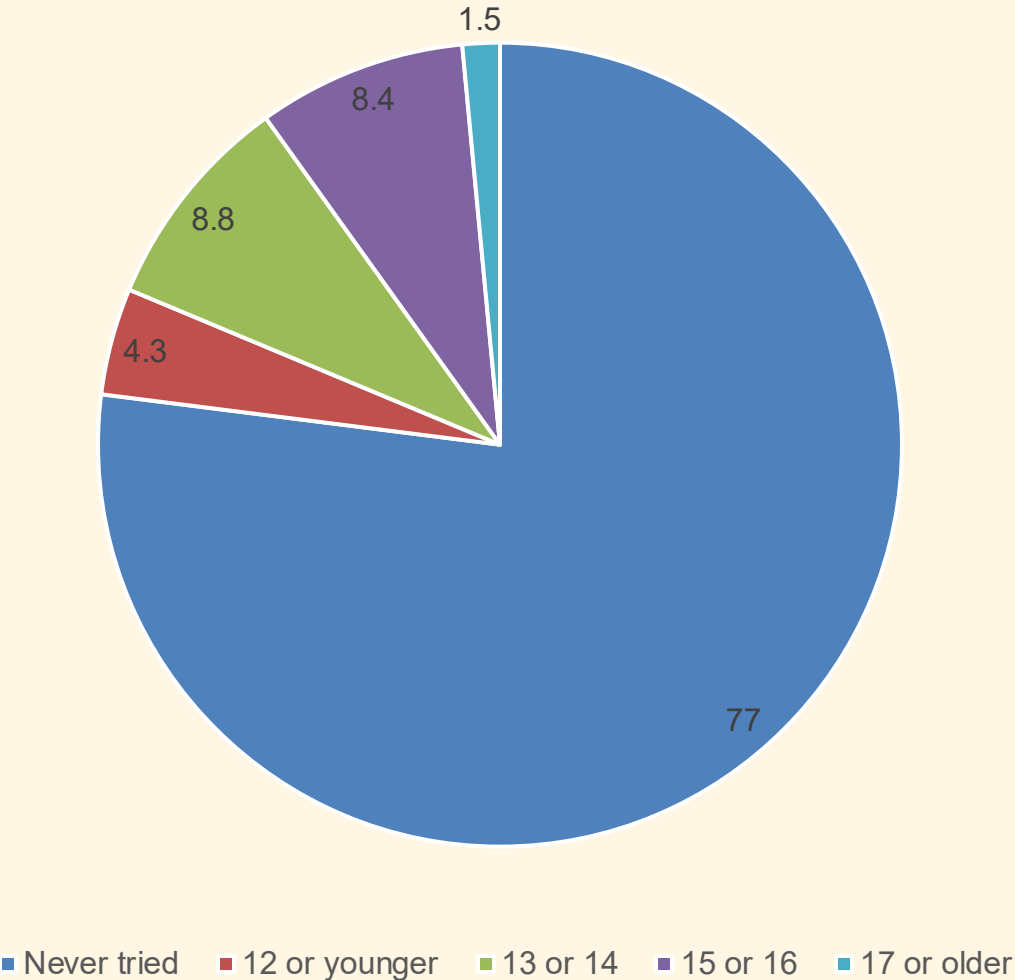


# Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey/Youth Tobacco Survey (YRBS/YTS)

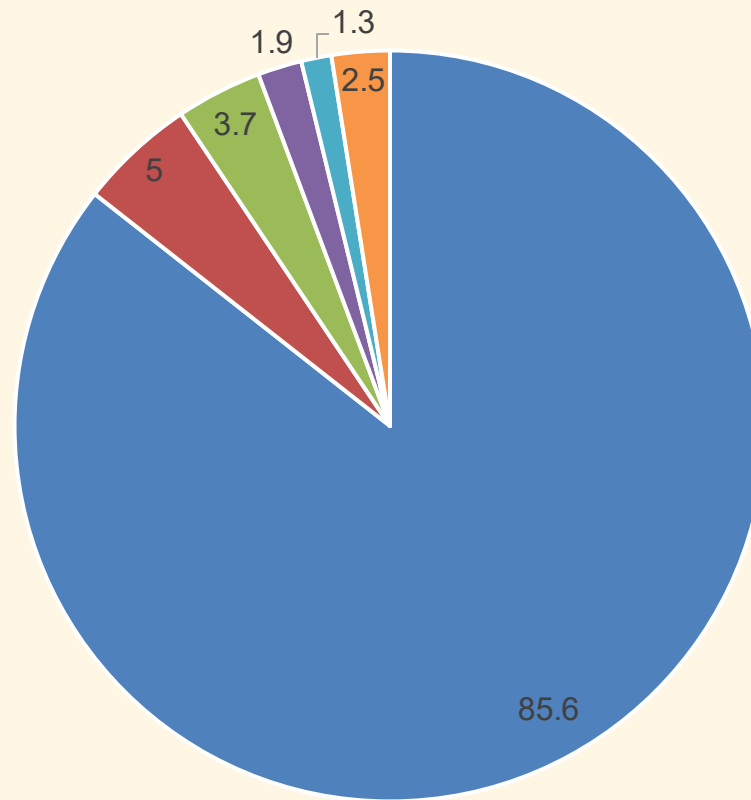
- The Maryland YRBS/YTS is an on-site survey of students in Maryland public middle and high schools.
- Focuses on risky behaviors that contribute to the leading causes of death and disability among these groups, such as:
  - **Alcohol and other drug use**
  - Tobacco use
  - Sexual behaviors
  - Unintentional injuries and violence
  - Poor physical activities and dietary behaviors



Maryland YRBS 22-23: Age of First Cannabis Use (Percentage)



## Maryland YRBS 22-23: Instances of Cannabis Use in Past 30 Days (Percentage)



■ 0 times ■ 1 or 2 times ■ 3 to 9 times ■ 10 to 19 times ■ 20 to 39 times ■ 40 or more times

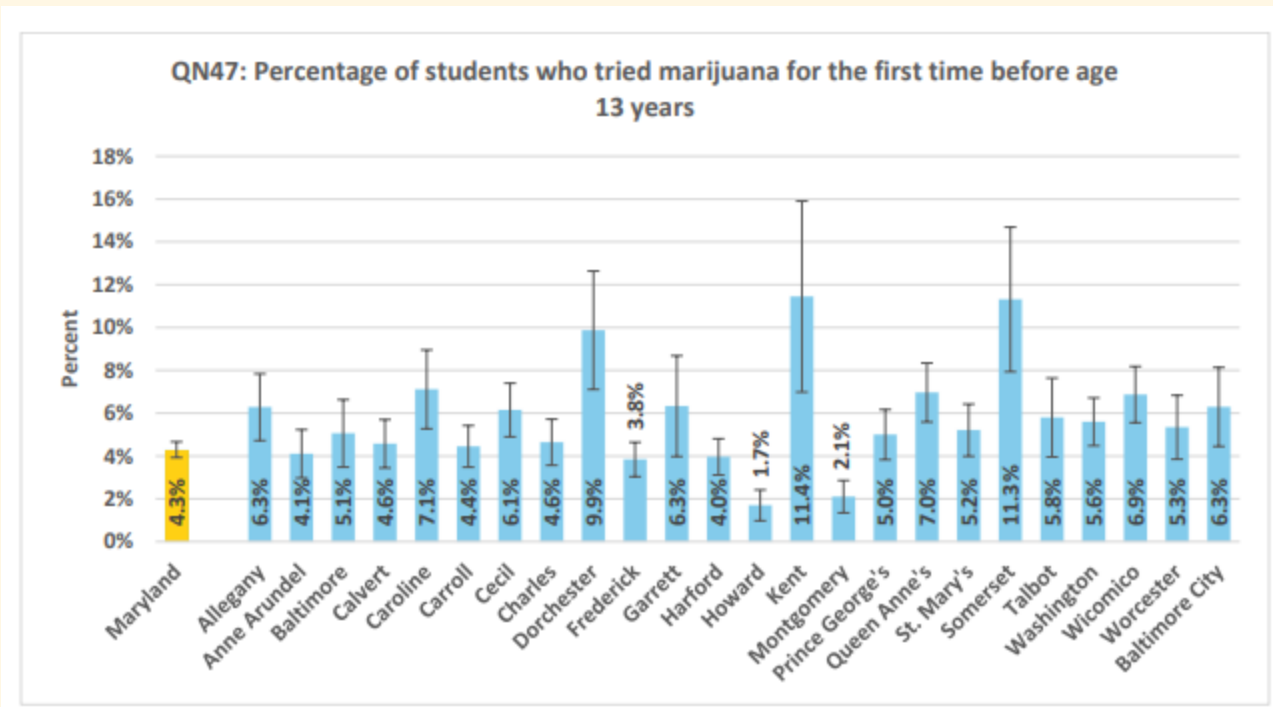


# Maryland Youth Risk Behavior Survey 2022-2023

- Percentage of students who reported using cannabis in the last 30 days.
  - **All ages: 14.4%**
  - 15 or younger: 10.4%
  - 16 or 17: 17.7%
  - 18 or older: 21.1%
- Compare to the national average, where 17% of high school students reported using cannabis in the last 30 days.
  - Colorado: 12.8%
  - New Jersey: 13.6%
  - Pennsylvania: 16.1%
  - Delaware: 18.2%



## MD 2022-2023 YRBS Results by Jurisdiction - Use Before 13



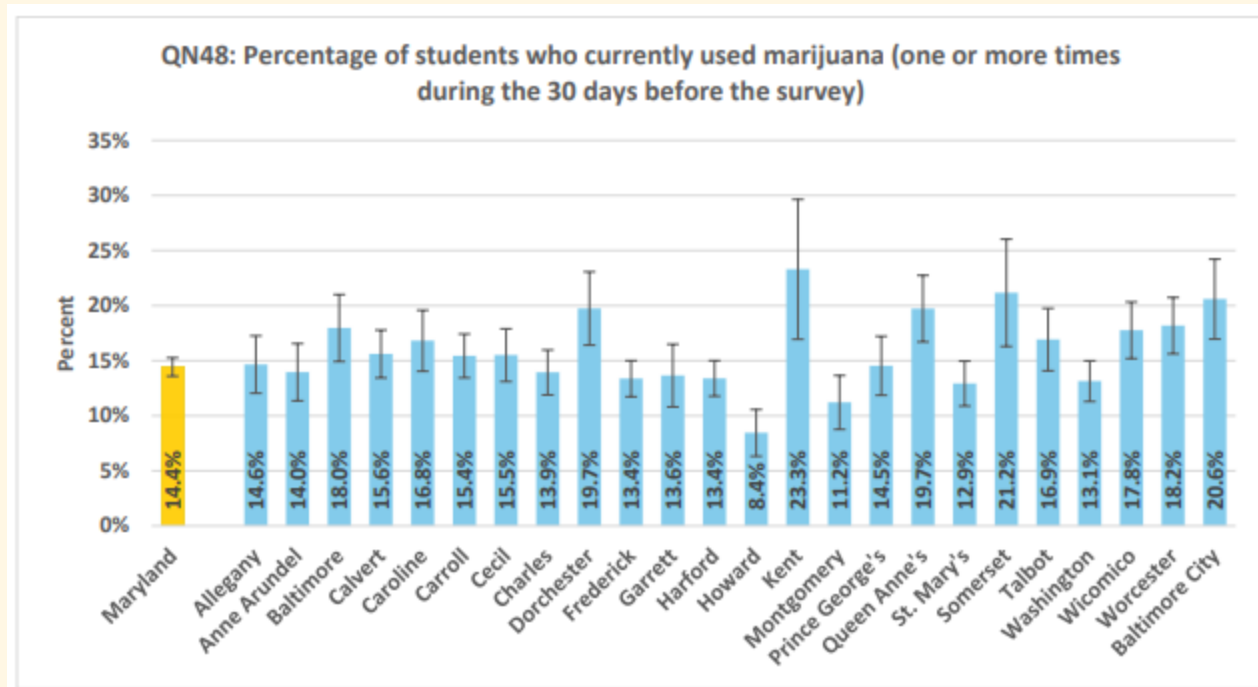
**Percentage of students who reported trying cannabis for the first time before 13 years old.**

- State overall: 4.3%
- Kent County (11.4%) and Somerset County (11.3%) have the percentages of students who tried before 13 years old.
- Howard County (1.7%) and Montgomery County (2.1%) have the lowest percentage of students who tried before 13 years old.





# MD 2022-2023 YRBS Results by Jurisdiction – Current Use

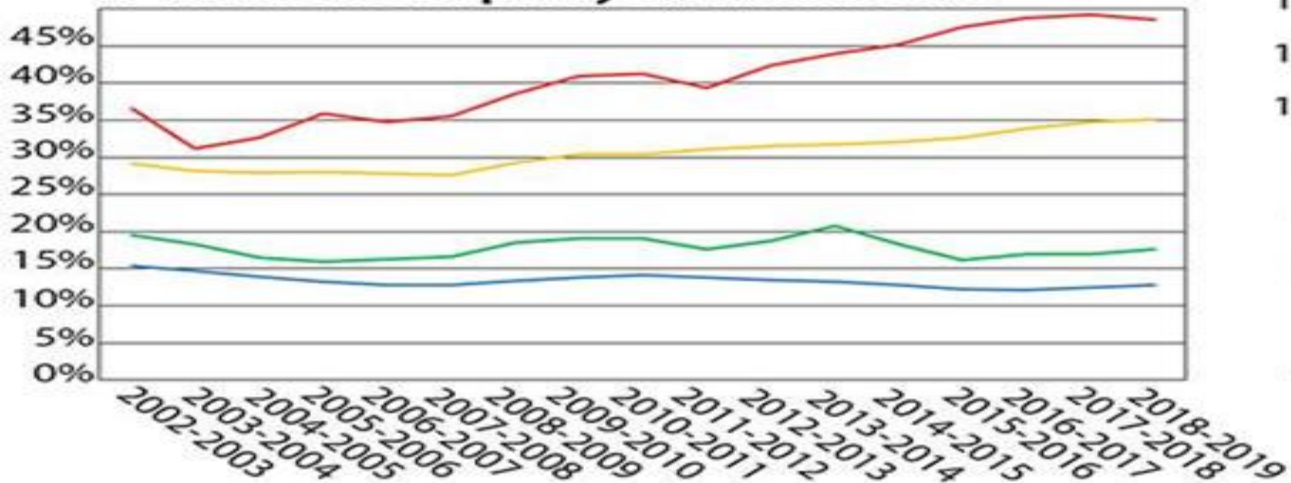


**Percentage of students who currently used cannabis (one or more times during the 30 days before the survey).**

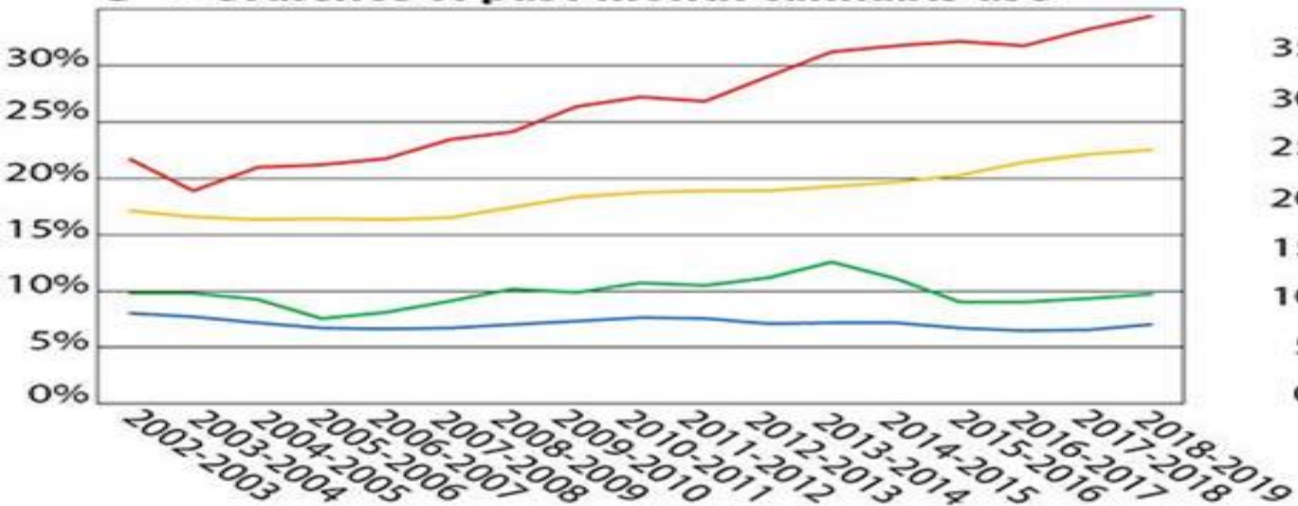
- State overall: 14.4%
- Kent County (23.2%) and Somerset County (21.2%) have the highest percentages of current use.
- Howard County (8.4%) and Montgomery County (11.2%) have the lowest percentages of current use.



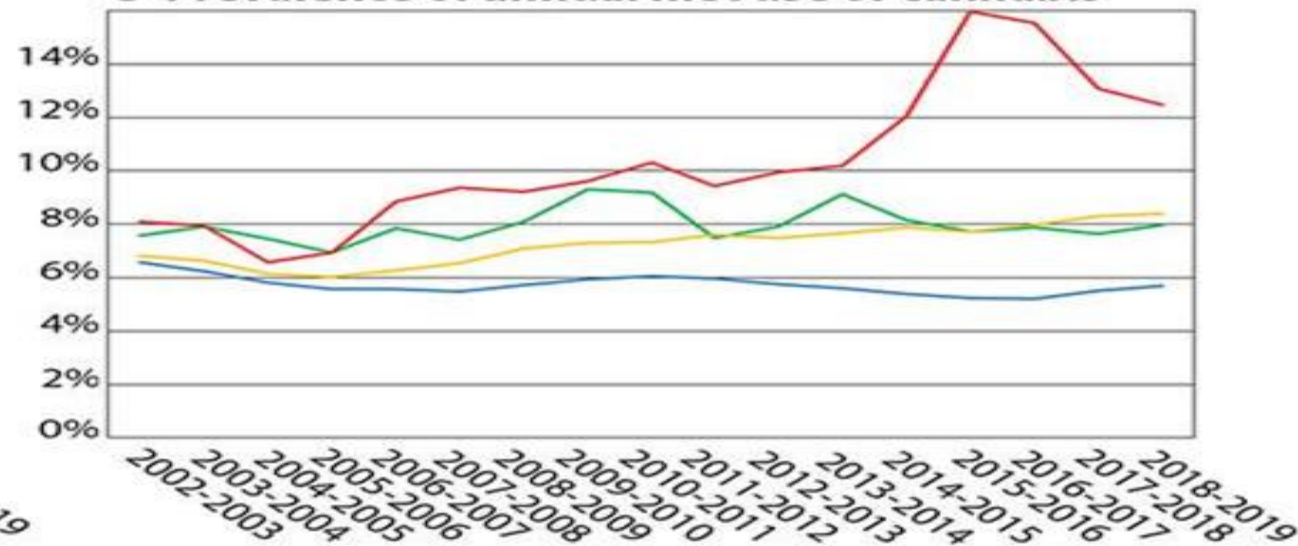
**A Prevalence of past-year cannabis use**



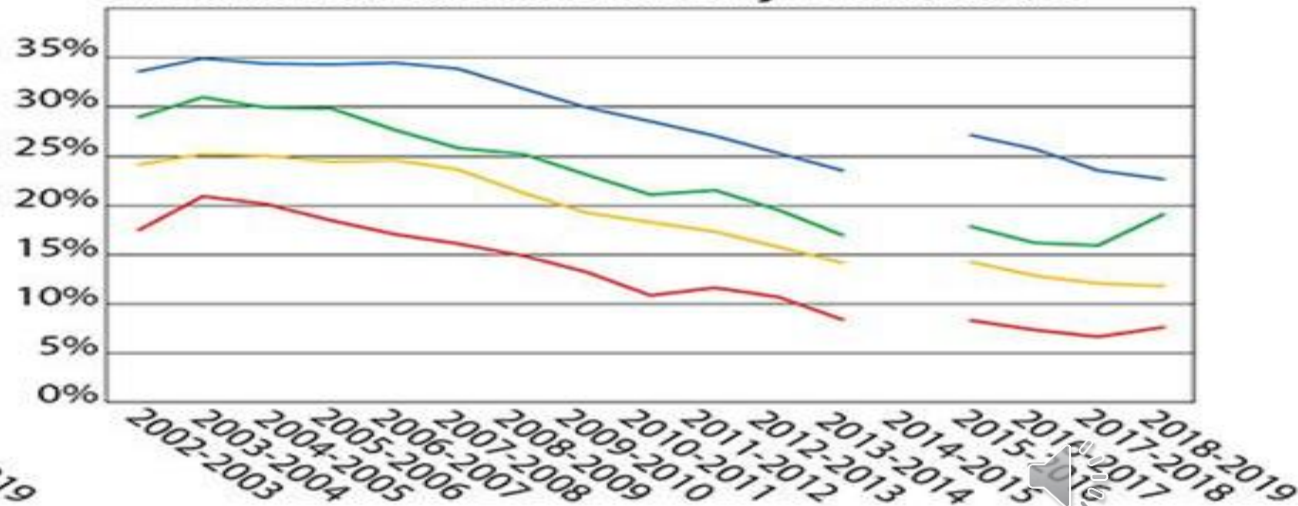
**B Prevalence of past-month cannabis use**



**C Prevalence of annual first use of cannabis**



**D Perceived harm of monthly cannabis use**



United States  
12-17 years old

Colorado  
12-17 years old

United States  
18-25 years old

Colorado  
18-25 years old

## Cannabis Use Disorder

- Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorder (DSM-5) defines cannabis use disorder (CUD) as the presence of clinically significant impairment or distress over 12 months, manifested by **at least two** of the following:
  - Cannabis is taken in larger amounts or used over a longer period than intended
  - **Persistent desire to reduce cannabis use, with unsuccessful attempts**
  - **Recurrent cannabis use resulting in neglect of social obligations**
  - **Continued cannabis use despite social or interpersonal problems**
  - Excessive time spent acquiring cannabis, using cannabis, or recovering from its effects
  - Cravings for cannabis use
  - Using cannabis rather than attending to important social, occupational, or recreational activities
  - Continued use despite physical or psychological problems associated with cannabis use
  - Increased cannabis tolerance
  - Withdrawal symptoms when not using cannabis



## The Colorado Experience – Cannabis Use Disorder in Adolescents

- Whether the prevalence of adolescent CUD increases post-legalization is unclear.
- Following the legalization of medical cannabis, higher rates of adolescent CUD were reported in Colorado.
- A 2020 study compared Colorado and Washington State to states where recreational cannabis remained illegal. This study showed that treatment admission rates for CUD declined significantly across the US, including in legal states like Colorado and Washington.





# Health Effects of Cannabis Use



## Short-term Health Effects of Cannabis

- Changes in mood
- Impaired body movement
- Difficulty with thinking and problem-solving
- Impaired memory
- Breathing problems
- Increased heart rate
- Intense nausea and vomiting
- Hallucinations and delusions (when taken in high doses)
- Psychosis (highest risk with regular use of high potency products, or in people predisposed to psychosis)



## Long-term Health Effects of Cannabis

- Some research demonstrates issues with breathing and respiration associated with cannabis use later in life.
- Cannabis use starting as a teenager may impair thinking, memory, and learning functions and may affect how the brain builds connections between these areas – brain development continues into late twenties.
- People who started smoking cannabis heavily in their teens and had ongoing cannabis use disorder lost an average of 8 IQ points between 13 and 38; those who started as adults didn't show notable IQ declines.
  - This may be caused by other factors such as genetics, family environment, etc.
- People who start using cannabis as a teenager are more likely to develop cannabis use disorder.



## Long-term Health Effects: Cannabis Hyperemesis Syndrome

- Cannabis Hyperemesis Syndrome (CHS) is a condition of repeated nausea and vomiting associated with long-term, frequent cannabis use.
- This syndrome presents outside of immediate use of cannabis.
- Affected individuals report that hot baths provide symptoms relief.
- Deaths have been reported associated with CHS and subsequent severe dehydration.
- Only treatment is to stop cannabis use.





# Correlates

- Many studies look at the association of adolescent cannabis misuse and adverse adulthood outcomes.
  - Higher odds of problem substance use, vaping, high-risk sex practices, delinquent behaviors, physical fighting, negative mental health outcomes, negative academic outcomes, and adverse social determinants of health (social isolation and history of arrest) associated with adolescent cannabis misuse.
- These could be explained by other factors.
  - Many different risk and protective factors likely contribute to early adolescent cannabis use, such as peer networks, family structure and quality, socio-economic status.





# Legal Limitations and Prohibitions



# What Cannabis Legalization Means for Youth

- In 2023, recreational cannabis use and possession was legalized for adults 21 years and older.
- Under Maryland law, cannabis use and possession by youth under 21 [remains illegal](#).
- Minor patients (<21 years old) may use medical cannabis in accordance with their written medical certification.
  - But even then, for patients under 18 years old, medical cannabis must be acquired by a caregiver, not the youth.
  - Medical cannabis cannot be smoked in public.
  - Medical cannabis may be used in [school](#) according to a student's written certification and school health plan. Medical cannabis may not be consumed in a combustible form (smoking, vaping, etc.) at school.



## Maryland Possession Limits

Personal Use Amount	Civil Use Amount
1.5 ounces of usable cannabis (e.g., cannabis flower)	Greater than 1.5 oz but less than 2.5 oz of usable cannabis
12 grams of concentrated cannabis (e.g., vape liquids and chemically concentrated cannabis products)	Greater than 12 grams but less than 20 grams of concentrated cannabis
Cannabis products containing 750 mg delta-9 THC (e.g., edibles and concentrated cannabis products)	Greater than 750 mg but less than 1,250 mg of delta-9 THC in a cannabis product



## Civil Penalties for Youth Use and Possession

Possession of Personal Use Amount	Possession of Civil Use Amount	Possession over Civil Use Amount
Civil Offense (\$100 and/or education/treatment)	Civil Offense (\$250 and/or education/treatment)	Misdemeanor Crime (6 months and/or \$1,000)

A court may order a person under 21 who commits such offenses to attend a drug education program approved by the Maryland Department of Health (MDH), refer the person to an assessment for substance abuse disorder, and refer the person to substance abuse treatment, if necessary.



# Civil Penalties for Public Smoking of Cannabis

Smoking Cannabis in Public – First Offense	Smoking Cannabis in Public – Second and Any Subsequent Offenses
\$50 fine	\$150 fine

These are the same penalties to which an adult would be subject



# Maryland Legal Protections Against Youth Use - Advertising

Maryland law...

- Prohibits youth-appealing advertisements
  - Ads cannot target or be attractive to minors, including cartoons, mascots or any other depiction that is commonly used to market to minors.
  - Ads cannot contain a design that displays the use of cannabis.
  - Design cannot encourage or promote cannabis for use as an intoxicant.
- Prohibits TV, radio, internet or print ads, unless greater than 85% of the audience is reasonably expected to be 21+.
- Requires that any advertisement on social media must include a notification that an individual must be at least 21 years old to view the content.
- Prohibits outdoor advertising; signs located on the outside of cannabis businesses can only be used to identify the business to the public.



# Legal Protections - Packaging, Labeling, and Product Design

Maryland law...

- Requires that edible products must be in geometric shapes; prohibits youth-appealing shapes, like those that resemble candy or animals.
- Prohibits youth-appealing packaging, including:
  - Resemblance to trademarked, characteristic, or product-specialized packaging of any commercially available candy, snack, baked good or beverage
  - Images of food, candy, baked goods, cereal, fruit, beverages, or the words "candy" or "candies"
  - Images, graphics, features, or likeness to images, graphics, or features that are popularly used to advertise to children, such as cartoons, animals, neon colors, celebrities, mascots, or phrases.
- Requires that cannabis product packaging must be tamper-evident, plain and opaque, and child resistant. Additionally, it must be resealable if it contains multiple servings.





## Legal Protections - Zoning

- In Maryland, a dispensary cannot be within 500 feet of a school, playground, public park, or place of worship.
  - Local government cannot set a zoning requirement more restrictive than this state standard (e.g., 1000 feet) but can reduce the exclusionary zone (e.g., 300 feet).
  - Local governments cannot be more restrictive with dispensaries than with alcohol retailers.
  - Local government can require that dispensaries are up to one half-mile from each other and 100 feet from residential areas.



# Legal Protections - Point of Sale Controls and Vendor Training

- [Point of sale controls](#): restricting underage access, identification checks, and restricting sales of cannabis products to licensed dispensaries.
- Retailers must age-gate websites to limit access of those younger than 21.
  - Age-gating features ask a user to input their date of birth to verify their age before allowing them to view content.
- Retailer education and [responsible vendor training](#).
  - Supports licensee compliance with Federal and State cannabis laws and regulations, including age requirements and acceptable identification cards.
  - All registered cannabis business agents must complete a Maryland Cannabis Administration-approved Responsible Vendor Training.



## Youth Education

- In 2022, the [Cannabis Public Health Advisory Council](#) was established to study the public health impact of adult-use cannabis legalization in Maryland. The Council is also charged with making recommendations in the following areas:
  - Youth cannabis use and prevention;
  - Youth behavioral health and educational outcomes; and
  - Educational programs, including school-based initiatives.
- The Council has:
  - Made recommendations to MDH regarding data and surveillance measures to better understand reasons for youth use, how products are being obtained, and what products are being obtained.
  - Made recommendations for school-based initiatives and education support and resources for Maryland educators.
- Local health departments are working to educate schools and other community members.





# Hemp



# Hemp Products

- In 2018, hemp was legalized under federal law (2018 Farm Bill).
- Since the legalization of hemp, the market for intoxicating hemp-derived products has exploded as the definition of hemp unintentionally allows for the creation of intoxicating products that legally contain **delta-8 THC, delta-9 THC, delta-10 THC, THCA**.
- Hemp is exempted from the definition of cannabis on the state and federal level.
- Hemp and hemp products do not fall within the regulatory system created for cannabis.
- The result: intoxicating hemp products, despite having a similar effect to cannabis, are not regulated like cannabis and cannabis products, which means ...
  - Safety provisions do not apply to hemp products.
  - Advertising prohibitions do not apply to hemp products.
  - Sale is not limited to dispensaries.
  - **Packaging and labelling requirements do not apply to hemp products.**



## Why Does This Matter?

- Hemp-derived products could be confounding youth-protective measures in Maryland cannabis policy.
- Though these products are limited to those age 21 and over like cannabis, they are sold in places (gas stations, convenience stores) where youth can access these products.
- Since they can be bought in places accessible to children, people may think they are safe for youth/minors.
- These products can also be appealing to children, so there is more potential exposure to them.



Source: Delta-8 THC gummies with CBD - Wikimedia



# New Rules to Address Hemp: SB 214/HB 12

- Passed in 2025, SB 214/HB 12 gives the ATCC greater enforcement power over THC products sold outside of licensed dispensaries.
- Authorizes the ATCC to issue citations for selling delta-8 THC and delta-10 THC to individuals under 21 years of age.
- Except for a licensed dispensary, a person may not sell or distribute a THC product that:
  - Is above 0.5 mg THC per serving or 2.5 mg THC per package
  - Is advertised as containing more than 0.5 mg THC per serving or 2.5 mg of THC per package
  - Violates packaging or labeling requirements for cannabis products
- The ATCC can seize, destroy, or confiscate THC products that violate these rules or that are offered or displayed for sale in a place that is not appropriately licensed to sell THC products.



# How to talk to youth about cannabis? Teen education resources

- The [National Institute on Drug Abuse](#) (NIDA) has lesson plans for educators on the science and consequences of drug use, developed by scientists from leading universities and the National Institute on Drug Abuse.
- NIDA also has a "[Conversation Starters](#)" page for parents on how to talk with teens about drugs and their effect, and where to go to get help.
- Stanford University has developed [Cannabis Toolkits](#) for elementary – high schoolers.
- Maryland Cannabis Administration has developed a [guide](#) for talking to teens about cannabis use.





# Questions?

Annie Carver, J.D.

[a.carver@law.umaryland.edu](mailto:a.carver@law.umaryland.edu)

(410) 706-4221

Legal Resource Center - Cannabis

[CannabisPubHealth@law.umaryland.edu](mailto:CannabisPubHealth@law.umaryland.edu)



# Citations

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- Md. Alc. & Bev. § Code 36-405.
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