

Substance Spotlight: Marijuana

What is Marijuana Prevention from a Town Perspective?

With recreational marijuana use now legal in Vermont and retail sales expected in 2022, Vermont towns can support the prevention and reduction of marijuana misuse through municipal plans and regulations such as language in the town plan supporting smoke and vape free parks and events, and ordinance language limiting marijuana outlet density. **Remember:** the purpose is not to restrict municipalities in fostering economic opportunities through establishments that produce, serve, distribute, or sell these products but to provide and enhance substance use prevention and early intervention for Vermont youth, leading to reductions in substance misuse across all ages.

Marijuana & Cannabis: What's the Difference?

The word "cannabis" refers to all products derived from the Cannabis plant while the word "marijuana" refers to parts of or products from the plant that contain substantial amounts of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC). In this "Substance Spotlight" "marijuana" will be used. Moving ahead, "marijuana" will often be replaced with "cannabis with THC". Moreover, Vermont House Bill S.54 (retail sales legislation) is changing "marijuana" for "cannabis" in Vermont Statutes.

CBD vs. THC

Tetrahydrocannabinol or "THC" is the psychoactive substance found in the leaves, stems, and dried flower buds of the cannabis (marijuana) plant. Cannabidiol or "CBD" is a non-psychoactive compound derived from both the hemp and marijuana plant and is marketed widely in health and wellness products. While CBD does not cause a "high" as with cannabis containing THC, it may contain trace amounts (up to 0.3%) and is therefore not regulated by the FDA.



Marijuana use among Vermont high school students increased from 24% to 27% in 2019 and the vaping of the substance increased from 2% to 17% among users.

Marijuana use affects the developing brain, specifically in the areas involved in attention, memory, decision-making, and motivation. Deficits in attention and memory have been detected in marijuana-using teens even after a month of abstinence. Towns can partner with local Substance-Use Prevention organizations to support education efforts aimed at the prevention and reduction of youth marijuana use.

Leadership Challenge: which of these will your town adopt first to support the reduction of marijuana misuse?

Action Step	Outcome
Adopt policies or ordinances that address social hosting and prohibit the consumption of marijuana in public spaces and events and align with Vermont's State Statutes.	Encourages healthy community engagement, reduces youth use, and supports the recovery community.
Town/public events should include health and wellness sectors. Event organizers are encouraged to promote smoke and vape-free areas.	Reduces subliminal messaging to youth that marijuana has to be part of events and festivals and helps support a family-friendly atmosphere.
Collaborate with local substance-use prevention organizations and the Vermont Cannabis Control Board to ensure licensees meet VT regulations.	Marijuana retailers are first in line to prevent underage persons access to marijuana products and paraphernalia. Positive recognition supports retailers and their role in reducing marijuana misuse.
Partner with local substance-use prevention organizations to address safe storage and proper disposal best practices for licensees and lodging facilities.	Safe storage options help protect consumers and prevent unintended access.
Review and consider updates to zoning bylaws and permitting applications to require 1,000 feet distance between marijuana retail outlets and community facilities such as schools, child care centers, and parks.	Reduces youth exposure to marijuana advertising messages.
Ensure signage ordinance adheres to content-neutral language best practices. Signage may be restricted based on size, location, type (color, design), number.	This protects the first amendment while allowing for an open dialogue about reducing marijuana promotional messages to young people and supporting those in recovery.



Sources: Meruelo AD, Castro N, Cota CI, Tapert SF. Cannabis and alcohol use, and the developing brain; 2019 VT Youth Risk Behavior Survey; nih.gov;samhsa.gov