



# Vermont Cannabis Legalization Information for Selectboards and Regional Commissions

Cannabis in our Community: Key Data to Consider







## Cannabis in Our Communities: Key Data to Consider

- *Cannabis is addictive*, according to the National Institutes of Health (NIH), and cannabis legalization tends to decrease perception of harm among youth.
- Cannabis legalization tends to increase overall rates of cannabis use, which makes it even more important to impose youth safeguards, according to a recent NIH study.
- Delaying youth access to drugs while the brain is still developing is especially crucial in light of data showing 90 percent of those who develop a substance-use disorder began using nicotine, alcohol or drugs before the age of 18, according to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University.
- One in six of those who start using marijuana in their teens will develop a substance-use disorder, according to the NIH.
- Research in 2020 from the National Institute on Drug Abuse suggested that smoking high-potency marijuana every day can increase the chances of developing psychiatric disorders, including psychosis (schizophrenia), depression, anxiety and substance-use disorders. The amount of the drug used, the age of first use and genetic vulnerability have all been shown to influence this relationship.





## Key Vermont data points about youth cannabis use in our communities:

- More than 55 percent of the 959 Vermonters treated for cannabis use by state providers from July 2018 to June 2019 were under the age of 25, according to data from the Vermont Department of Health. The data also showed that 80 percent of 12- to 17-year-olds treated were there for cannabis dependency.
- Active use of cannabis among Vermont youth has increased from 39 percent to 46 percent in the past six years, according to the Vermont Young Adult Survey. In 2020, almost half (45 percent) of youth who reported cannabis use in the survey said they had used it for 20 or more of the past 30 days.
- Notably, the data show those at risk of significantly higher rates of cannabis use among vulnerable populations in Vermont include 1) those experiencing housing and food insecurity, 2) LGBTQ+ youth, 3) those with preexisting mental health conditions, and 4) students of color.



**By bringing retail cannabis into our community, we are potentially exposing the above groups to even greater risks. This is why it is so important to establish municipal CCCs that can put in place safeguards before the retail cannabis industry sets up shop.**

**An environment that protects those at risk from substance misuse would include reducing risk factors via advertising and drug availability, counterbalancing them with protective factors, such as education, skill-building, support, community engagement and reduced access to substances. It is also important to pay attention to how we establish and model social norms surrounding cannabis usage, marketing and access, as Vermont moves into cannabis sales.**





Windham County Prevention Partnership  
1 School Street, Wilmington, VT 05363  
802-464-22028  
windhampartnership.org



Based on the above data, we hope you will also consider adopting a formal mechanism to put a portion of these funds toward substance-misuse prevention efforts, recovery and enforcement, including data collection and reporting to improve outcomes for youth and vulnerable populations.

## Windham County Prevention Partnership

Jacob Deutsch, Project Coordinator, West River Valley Thrives:  
802-365-4700; WRVTCordinator@gmail.com

Cassandra Holloway, Director, Building a Positive Community:  
802-257-2175; cassandra.bapc@gmail.com

Cindy Hayford, Director, Deerfield Valley Community Partnership:  
802-464-2202; chayford.dvcp@gmail.com

