

Our department works very closely with school districts and we wanted to make sure you are aware of some recent legal changes within our state surrounding the legalization of marijuana for recreational use and how it could affect children in our community. Possession or consumption of marijuana by someone under the age of 21 remains illegal. As we are sure you are aware, voters passed Measure 91 legalizing marijuana and the law went into effect July 1, 2015. With the legalization of marijuana for adults, marijuana will be treated like alcohol – legal for adults only. We all like to believe that kids make good decisions and, in fact most of the time they do, but remember “peer pressure” is at an all-time high in their lives. With immediate access to friends through social media, they are dealing with pressures we never had to when we were their age. If a child is found to be under the influence or in possession at school, the police will be notified and there will be a referral to the Juvenile Department.

Marijuana is not the same drug as it was in the 1960’s and 70’s when the THC content was much lower (6-15% THC). With new methods to extract only the THC children could access marijuana products which contain up to 90% THC. Today marijuana is available in many forms such as marijuana edibles, including cookies and candy, oils and dabs. Delivery devices such as vaporizers, vape pens, pipes and bongs are increasingly manufactured in bright, trendy colors and designs that are attractive to teenagers. These items can be difficult to detect as they are easily hidden and often designed to look like ink pens, electronic gadgets, breathing inhalers and more.

In Jackson County, 24% of 11th graders report using marijuana within the past 30 days¹ and 43% of the youth referred to the Jackson County Juvenile Services for possession of marijuana were between 13-15 years old (7th, 8th, 9th grade). Educate yourself on the signs of drug and alcohol use. This is important as a child’s brain will not be fully developed until they are between 23 and 25 years of age. Children are building the pathways in their brain which will provide them the capacity for adult functions in reasoning and decision-making.

We hope that this information has been informative and leads to conversation with children about expectations; our goal is to help share information in an ever-changing world so that others can be aware of current trends and issues and help children make good choices.