



The Georgia Marijuana Abuse Prevention Initiative

In an unprecedented move to help protect Georgia's youth and assist Georgia's employers and workforce, The Council on Alcohol and Drugs initiated the *Georgia Marijuana Abuse Prevention Initiative*.

Two major goals

- **Prevent and reduce marijuana abuse in Georgia among youth and young adults**

A crucial first step in tackling the problem of marijuana abuse is to educate parents, youth, and other Georgia residents about the dangers of using marijuana. Such education will include a social marketing campaign using traditional media channels. The Initiative will work also work in tandem with and provide content and guidance for a major social media campaign. Policy education will also be provided for Georgia's policymakers. A statewide collaborative is a major component of the Initiative.

- **Prevent and reduce marijuana abuse in Georgia's workforce**

The Council's Drug Free Workplace/Department of Transportation (DFW/DOT) Division's primary goal within in the Collaborative is to educate business owners, safety directors, human resource managers, chamber of commerce affiliates, community leaders, and other business professionals on the risks associated with marijuana in the workplace. This increased use is creating problems for companies in Georgia. Confusion is occurring regarding the differences in federal and state regulations, workplace accidents are increasing, and it is becoming more difficult for employers to find qualified workers to fill safety-sensitive positions. It is important for the Council to be involved in educating employers and employees on the negative impact that legalization of marijuana will have on Georgia's workforce and businesses. Educational tools are available via internet, paper handouts, in-person trainings, and webcasts. The DFW/DOT Division invites all businesses to join the Collaborative.

The Initiative represents a sensible approach to marijuana abuse prevention. For example, the Initiative favors the use of administrative sanctions rather than criminal penalties for minor, non-violent marijuana-related offenses, especially where such offenses have been committed by youth. In such cases sanctions such as drug court involvement, counseling and education are viewed as viable alternatives to incarceration. The Council also recognizes racial and ethnic disparity has influenced some arrests and convictions in certain cases.

The Initiative also desires to provide effective, safe medications containing medicinal ingredients of marijuana for patients with a justifiable medical reason for such use at the soonest possible opportunity. In this regard the Initiative favors medications approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) or currently under review via a FDA-approved process. The Initiative favors such medications in order to treat symptoms of certain diseases and conditions such as intractable pediatric epilepsy, AIDS wasting and chemotherapy-induced nausea when they do not respond to more traditional FDA-approved medicines.

The Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF)

Being science-based, The Council will apply Steps 1-5 of the Strategic Prevention Framework (SPF) developed by the Federal Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). The Council will use these steps as the means to the ends of preventing and reducing marijuana abuse in Georgia.

To begin this process The Council will contract with a respected academic institution to produce a Marijuana Abuse Needs Assessment and Prevalence Report. Other steps are Capacity Building, Strategic Planning, Implementation and Evaluation.

Deliverables of the Georgia Marijuana Abuse Prevention Initiative

1. Collaborate with governmental agencies, prevention providers, the business sector, Georgia's Drug Free Community Coalitions (DFCCs), the medical community, law enforcement, and other entities to accomplish Initiative goals to include creating or adapt training modules on the prevention of marijuana abuse.
2. Provide technical assistance and training to *Let's Be Clear Georgia: A Collaborative to Prevent Marijuana Abuse*.
3. Create and implement a "traditional" media campaign to include use of press releases, radio public service announcements and posters. The Initiative will work in partnership with a related marijuana abuse prevention social media campaign to operate under the aegis of *Let's Be Clear Georgia*.
4. Contract with Georgia State University's School of Public Health to conduct, publish and disseminate a statewide marijuana needs assessment including findings and recommendations regarding preventing marijuana abuse in Georgia.
5. Contract with a respected academic institution to evaluate the Initiative per Step 5 of the Strategic Prevention Framework.
6. Provide trainings, training modules, and technical assistance to government agencies, youth, parents, young adults, adults, seniors, and others on statewide, regional and community levels. Collaborate with the medical community regarding their efforts to train physicians and other healthcare workers. Such trainings will be in the form of information presentations and conference workshops with training modules to be made available over the Internet.
6. Provide policy education services to educate the public and policy makers about legislative issues related to marijuana abuse prevention in Georgia.

For more information please contact Gregg Raduka, Ph.D.,LPC, ICPS at graduka@livedrugfree.org or call him at 404) 223-2483.