

Good Day from Mt. Ascutney Prevention Partnership & Green Peak Alliance!
Below please find our *January 2022* prevention digest.

This month's edition focuses on supporting youth, providing resources, and links related to Cannabis. *Many towns in VT will be voting in January or at March Town Meeting on whether or not to host cannabis retail shops in their towns.* It is very important that residents know all of the facts before going to the polls.

Disclaimer: this is a very complex issue and it is impossible to cover all of the details in a format like this. It is our goal to ensure that residents and towns that opt in have the information and support they need to allow adult access to retail cannabis for those who choose to use while also providing guidelines that help protect those who shouldn't or don't want to use it (like youth and persons in recovery).

As always, we hope you find our digest helpful. Please reply to this email if this digest has reached you in error and *you would like to be removed.*

Best wishes,

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This month's topics:

- **Overview:** the basics – what is Cannabis? “Pot” vs. CBD products?
- **Act 164 Cannabis Retail:** basic information about the law, timeline, etc.
- **Products & Potency :** Cannabis is not just “pot” or “weed” anymore
- **Some science:** helping consumers find reliable data to make informed decisions
- **Cannabis resources for education:** For educators, students, and families! Talk to your kids about cannabis, share the facts, think about your core family values and clarify expectations
- **Concerned about cannabis use?** Resources to offer help and support

Overview – Cannabis is a plant that includes both Hemp and Marijuana*. The big difference is that Marijuana contains a chemical called THC that causes a person to get high. The hemp plant contains very little THC and is currently used to make CBD products. While there are many CBD products already in sold in stores, there are no consumer guidelines for proper dose, frequency, drug interactions, etc. to ensure consumer safety. Without safety guidelines, CBD products are not recommended for kids.

* Due to cultural sensitivity, the word marijuana is being phased out of many communications and replaced with just cannabis

Act 164, Vermont's Retail Cannabis Law – Towns in VT have the choice to “opt in” to hosting cannabis retail stores. Many towns have already “opted in” and others are calling votes soon. While it is impossible to cover all of the law, here are a few basic points:

- The [Cannabis Control board](#) is a 3-member body tasked with setting all regulations.
- Medical cannabis dispensaries (already in operation) will be able to sell “adult only” cannabis as early as May 2022; other approved licensees can open in October 2022.
- Currently, towns that host cannabis stores will not get any tax revenue unless they have a local options tax. The CCB has made a recommendation that towns be allowed to get some tax revenue but the outcome of that recommendation has yet to be considered and will be addressed in coming 2022 legislative session.
- All revenue from cannabis sales goes to the state of VT where 30% of the revenue will go to fund universal afterschool care and substance misuse prevention initiatives.
- Towns that vote to opt in can establish local cannabis control commissions (or CCCs) in order to decide what local regulations fit best for their town. Local regulations might include density (how many stores?), location (where can they be located), days/hours of operation, licensing conditions (and what criteria would constitute a license violation), etc.
- Once a town opts in and retailers are established, the town can vote at a later time to “Opt out” but already established stores are granted “legacy rights”. Therefore an “opt in” vote has some aspects of permanency.

Products and Potency – Cannabis has evolved from basic “weed” to highly sophisticated inhalable/ingestible products. This is similar to the journey of phones from rotary dial to smartphones! This chart outlines the different types of current cannabis products, their strength in THC and some of the lingo. Note, THC content of “weed” in the 1960’s and 70’s was around 4%-7%.

Leaf	Edibles	Concentrates	Vape Oils *
VT law allows for THC cap of 30% THC	VT law allows for THC cap of 60% THC	Not capped, and trending around 80%	THC varies
“Flower” “Bud” “Herb”	Gummies, cookies, candy, brownies, etc.	“Shatter” “Dabs” “Wax”	“Vape” “Diffuse” “Juice”
			

*Of particular interest to note: vaping nicotine, CBD, hash, THC oil, etc. does NOT result in an odor, a passerby cannot tell what is being vaped

The Science: While impossible to cover everything, the overarching public health concern related to retail cannabis stems from the strength/potency of new-age products and long-term effects from use. Studies do show that increasing access through increased retail does increase use among certain populations (especially youth) and leads to unintentional consequences. Here are a few examples:

- [Geographical access to recreational marijuana](#) – Study from Washington State finds that, as retailers opened, some individuals used cannabis more and used it more frequently (concentrated effects seen in young adults aged 18-26, women, and rural residents).
- Mental Health effects such as addiction and [psychosis](#) was found to increase 3-5 times when using high-potency cannabis (>15% THC) and/or using nearly everyday
- While some persons with substance use disorder are able to decrease opioid use when using cannabis, a [study finds](#) that cannabis use appears to increase rather than decrease the risk of opioid use and opioid use disorder.
- Since cannabis retail opened in neighboring states, Poison control center calls for accidental ingestion of cannabis in young persons has increased 140% in [Massachusetts](#) and 160% in [Maine](#).

* Note: there is a tremendous amount of conflicting data on the internet. When exploring facts related to the issue, look for peer reviewed studies like those provided here. Websites or articles with a .net or .com link are less reliable than links ending in .edu or .gov.

Cannabis resources for education – Communities, schools, and families can mitigate the risk from increased access to cannabis by sharing facts, engaging in discussion, and helping children/students make decisions based on their goals.

- Stamford cannabis awareness [toolkit](#)
- Vermont's [Let's talk cannabis](#) resources for Youth, Parents, Adults, on Pregnancy, etc.
- Vaping Cannabis, [what we know, what we don't](#)
- Educational offering coming SOON:



Teens and Cannabis:

A look into the data on the impacts of legal retail markets on youth

January 13th, 7:00pm, Zoom

In-depth look at cannabis data as it relates to youth in Vermont and around the country. Presented by public health expert John Searles, PhD. [Learn more and register here \[healthylamoillevalley.us9.list-manage.com\]](#).

Concerned? – Like other substances affect the brain, cannabis is addicting and addiction is increasing as potency is increasing. Cutting down or stepping into a recovery plan is possible. Resources for free, non-judgmental support include:



~ [We are Worthwhile](#) – find peer support, call or text 802-234-1550 (for adults and youth)

~ [VT Helplink](#) – call 802-565-LINK or chat online