

# The Impact of Marijuana Legalization: A Prevention Perspective

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What does this mean  
for prevention?

# Youth marijuana use is happening

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- ▶ 39% of Alaskan youth have ever used marijuana
- ▶ 20% of Alaskan youth currently use marijuana
- ▶ Among youth, associated problems include:
  - ▶ School failure, dropout, truancy
  - ▶ Poorer memory, attention, IQ
  - ▶ Other risk behavior
  - ▶ Justice system involvement
  - ▶ Mental health problems
  - ▶ Abuse and dependence
- ▶ Use before age 18 increases these risks

# The premise of prevention science

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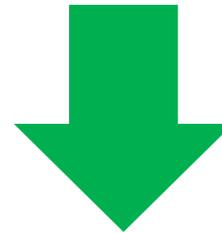
To prevent a problem before it happens, the factors that predict the problem must be changed



# Predictors are organized into two groups

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Risk Factors



Protective Factors

# The first step of prevention

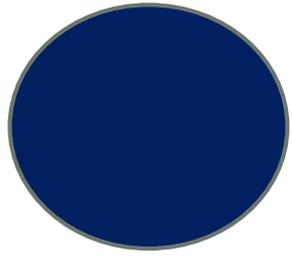
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To identify and understand the risk and protective factors that predict the problem



# Risk factors for youth marijuana use

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Community

## **Availability of drugs**

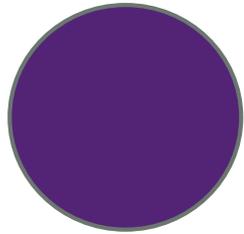
**Community laws and norms** favorable toward drug use and crime

Media portrayals

Transitions and mobility

Extreme economic deprivation

Low neighborhood attachment and community disorganization



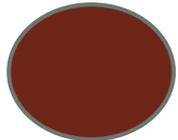
Family

Family history of the behavior

Family management problems

Family conflict

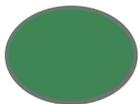
**Favorable parental attitudes** and involvement in the behavior



School

Academic failure beginning in late elementary school

Lack of commitment to school



Individual/Peer

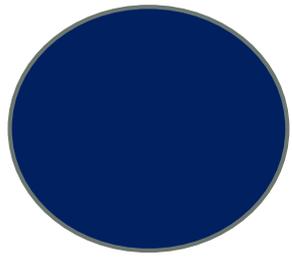
Friends who engage in the behavior

Favorable attitudes toward the behavior

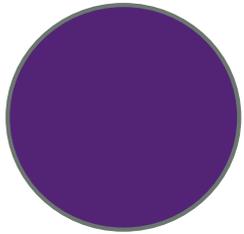
**Early initiation of the behavior**

# Protective factors for youth marijuana use

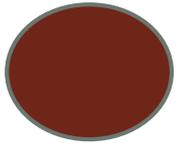
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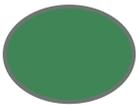
Community



Family



School



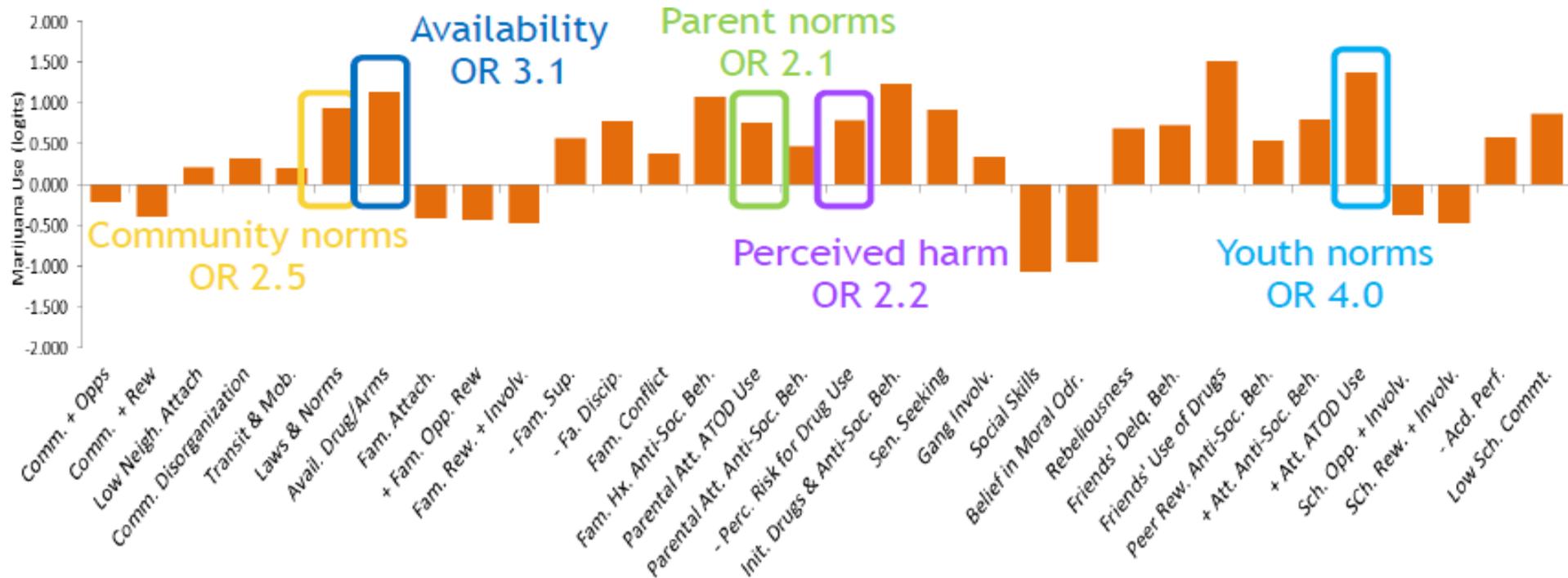
Individual/Peer

Prosocial opportunities  
Reinforcement for prosocial involvement  
Bonding (connectedness, attachment)  
Clear and healthy standards for behavior

High intelligence  
Resilient temperament  
Competencies and skills



# Risk and protective factors for youth marijuana use



# Parents are essential to prevention

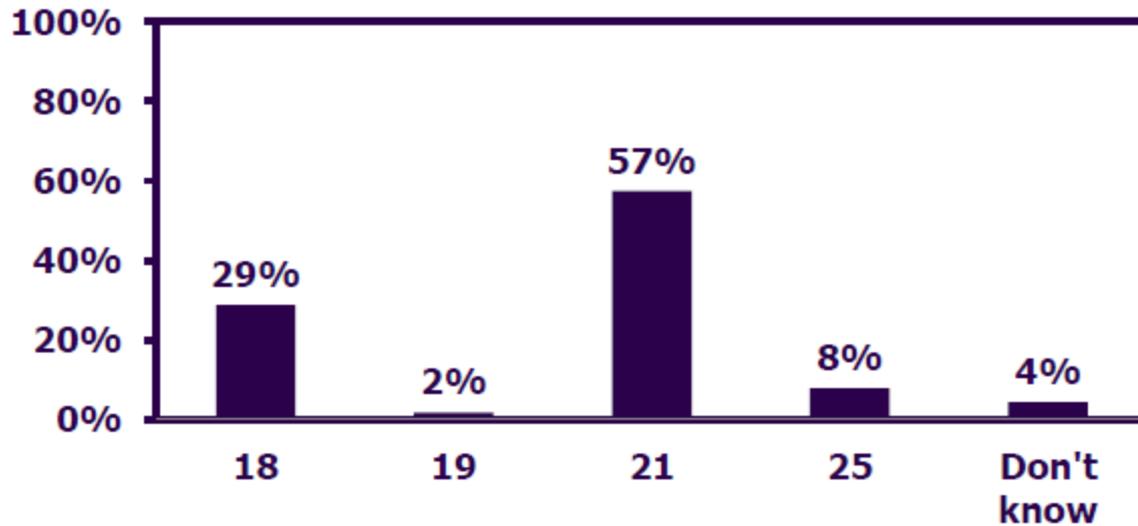
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- ▶ Parents are an important influence on their children's drug use through high school
- ▶ Parents can influence their children through their:
  - ▶ Knowledge of the legal age limit
  - ▶ Norms about marijuana use
  - ▶ Parenting practices

# Do parents know the legal age for marijuana use?

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## What is the legal age limit for marijuana use?



*Nonrepresentative sample of  
parents of Tacoma 10<sup>th</sup> graders*

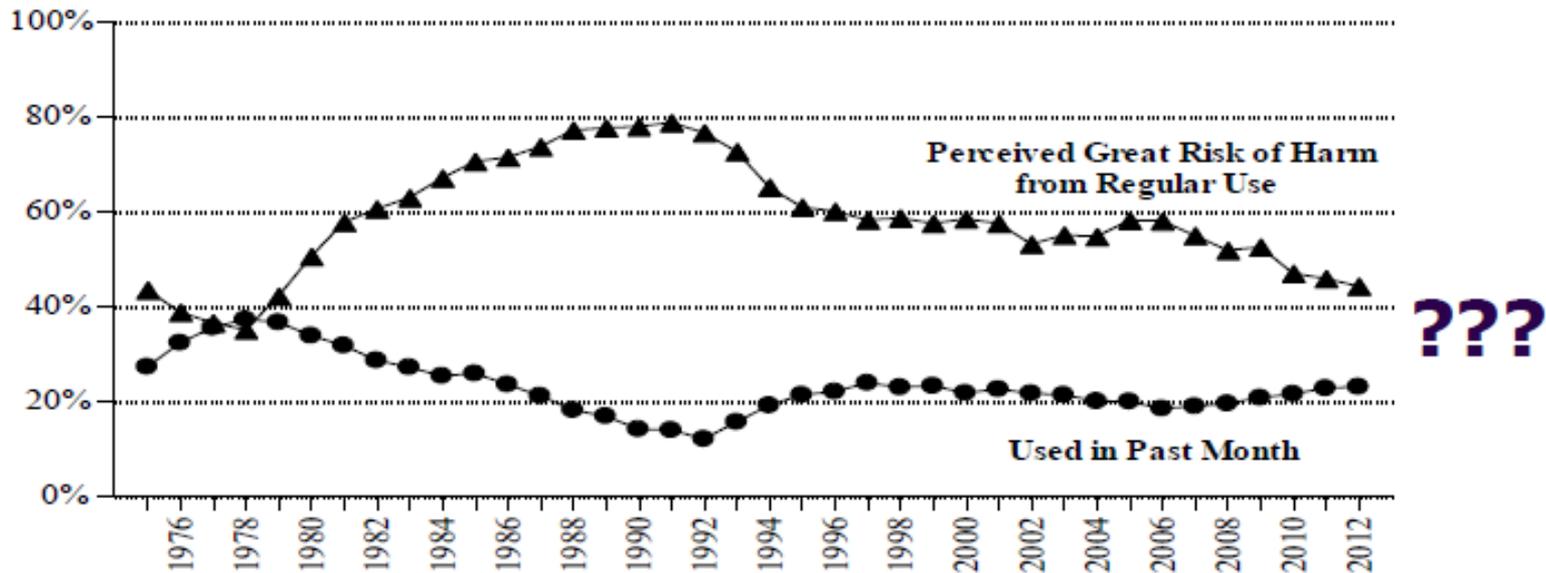
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Source: Mason et al., 2013

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# Perceived harm is related to teen use

## U.S. Twelfth Graders Reporting Perceived "Great Risk of Harm" and Marijuana Use in Past Month, 1975-2012



Source: Adapted by CESAR from University of Michigan, Monitoring the Future

# Marijuana legalization may affect the levels of risk and protective factors for youth

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- ▶ Two factors will change
  - ▶ **Availability**
  - ▶ **Norms**
- ▶ Other factors may change:
  - ▶ Family management
  - ▶ Marijuana-specific parenting practices
  - ▶ Peer and sibling use
  - ▶ Parent use
  - ▶ Youth alcohol and cigarette use

# Implications

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- ▶ Limit availability to youth
  - ▶ Edibles that appeal to youth
- ▶ Influence youth norms about use
- ▶ Influence adult norms
  - ▶ Parental norms
  - ▶ Providing marijuana to youth and youth use
- ▶ Address other risk and protective factors
  - ▶ Timing and settings for interventions

THANK YOU!

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