

“What we are trying to tell them is ... ‘No, not everyone is using marijuana ...’”

— JONATHAN MODIE, OREGON HEALTH AUTHORITY SPOKESMAN

Pot use in teens

Study finds legalization hasn't led to more young users, but some are using more



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BY DYLAN DARLING
The Register-Guard

Teens who used pot before recreational marijuana became legal in Oregon now use even more, according to a recent study by a Eugene-based research center.

But the legalization of recreational pot for people older than age 21 hasn't led to an increase in the overall number of teens using marijuana, said Julie Rusby, a senior research scientist at the Oregon Research Institute.

“The law didn't make new kids decide to use. But those who are using decided to use more,” said Rusby, the lead author of the report.

Researchers collected survey data

from 444 students in Lane, Douglas and Marion counties, Rusby said. Half of those in the study went from eighth to ninth grade just before marijuana legalization in 2015, and the other half did so after it became legal. The ages ranged from 13 to 15.

One of the survey questions asked the teens how often they had used pot in the past 30 days. The 14 percent of teens who said they use pot now say they had used marijuana an average of 18 days in the period, Rusby said, up a couple of days per month compared to teens before legalization.

The findings reinforce concerns about

FOR MORE INFORMATION

◆ To read the study, visit www.ori.org.

teens and pot use, she said, as well as a need for more education. Rusby said marijuana use by teens can cause learning problems. She urged school districts to consider educational campaigns for teens and parents.

It's illegal under Oregon law for those younger than 21 to use pot, or for people to provide or sell them pot.

The Oregon Health Authority already has a campaign of billboards and videos aimed at preventing youth marijuana use, called “Stay True to You.” The \$4 million campaign started in July 2016 in the Portland metro area and Southern Oregon. Last July, the health agency announced it would expand the cam-

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Pot: Three of 19 shops sold to minors in OLCC checks

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paigned to all of Oregon. Teens are the target.

The ads serve as a counterpoint to the notion that marijuana use is becoming the norm, according to Oregon Health Authority spokesman Jonathan Modie.

“What we are trying to tell them is that, ‘No, not everyone is using marijuana and it’s OK to not use marijuana,’” he said. Pot “is legal in Oregon, but not for young people. We want young people to thrive and achieve what they want in life and, because their brains are still developing, marijuana use can potentially affect that.”

The Oregon Liquor

Control Commission regulates recreational marijuana sales in the state. When it comes to teens and marijuana, the agency has focused on making sure retailers don’t sell pot to those younger than 21.

OLCC recently released the results of compliance checks at stores around the state, during which minors volunteering for OLCC attempted to buy pot. Three out of 19 shops in Eugene and Springfield sold to minors during the Dec. 20 checks.

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