AT A GLANCE

Amendment 64 created a framework that allows adults aged 21 or older to consume marijuana recreationally in Colorado. A statewide tax, along with Denver’s special sales tax of 3.5 percent, supports the mission of Denver’s Office of Marijuana Policy—tasked with licensure, regulation, enforcement and support of public health programs.

In 2017, an allocation of $1.5 million was granted to the Office of Children’s Affairs to support early prevention efforts through afterschool and summer programs. A competitive grants process invests these funds in Denver’s youth serving organizations, especially those who serve communities with limited opportunities. Grantees who serve middle school youth delivered a five-hour curriculum in the fall of 2017 called Healthy Lifestyles 101, where trusted adults help youth think about marijuana within positive youth development settings.

Over the summer of 2017, the Denver Afterschool Alliance and the YESS Institute engaged in a project to update the Healthy Lifestyles curriculum to better meet the community’s needs. Using program data and feedback from providers, three important changes were made:

Program activities were created to be hands-on and put youth at the center of the decision-making process.

A catalog of trusted resources was created to aid providers.

Facilitators of the curriculum were trusted adults with existing relationships with youth.

These changes resulted in a five hour course with the goal of helping youth to make healthy decisions—consistent with their individual values—when faced with challenges related to marijuana use.

The YESS Institute youth development and education philosophy focuses on creating leadership from within. Programs have a strong focus on social emotional skills, post-secondary readiness and healthy choices.
PROGRAM DATA

205 valid assessments were received across 19 programs that delivered Healthy Lifestyles 101 to middle school youth in the fall of 2017. We use this data to measure the efficacy of the program and to update the activities.

MJ 101 FACTS

- 79% of middle school youth know that getting caught with marijuana could mean a fine or not getting a driver’s license.
- 83% know that marijuana use can lead to lower grades in school.
- 80% know that smoking marijuana makes it harder to breathe.

The learning objectives were based on a review of the health and legal consequences of using marijuana. The data shows that about 4 in 5 youth understood that using marijuana could get in the way of personal, academic or athletic goals.

MJ 101 MYTHS

To build a “correct working knowledge” of marijuana, we needed to address the common myths youth have. Since legalization, various agencies have noted that both youth and adults operate with misinformation and may make decisions contrary to their values. The data below show the percent disagreement with the prompt provided.

- 47% of middle school youth disagree that most kids their age in Colorado are using marijuana.
- 90% disagree that marijuana use improves balance and vision.
- 61% disagree that marijuana use can improve how neurotransmitters send messages.
- 68% disagree that marijuana affects kids and adults in the same ways.
- 87% disagree that marijuana is natural, so it is harmless and OK to use.

OF YOUTH WHO ATTENDED HL 101...

- 89% said it helped them think about who to trust when getting information about marijuana.
- 83% said it helped them understand how marijuana impacts their brain functions.
- 77% said it got them to see how marijuana can get in the way of the future they want.
- 82% said it helped them think about how friends can influence each other’s decisions.
- 74% said they better understand the history of marijuana and how it came to be legal.

Youth responses to this survey will help us improve specific activities to achieve program goals as we create additional curricula. We will also use this data to advocate for a positive youth development approach to marijuana prevention.

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