Cannabis Legalization & Public Health

Cannabis, Public Health Prevention and Communications: Stages of Change

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Stages of change

• From research primarily in the psychology field asking, “Why and how do people change?”

• There are 5 primary stages of change
  – Precontemplation
  – Contemplation
  – Preparation
  – Action
  – Maintenance
Stage 1: Pre-contemplation - cannabis prevention? What cannabis?

– The new behavior – developing a position on and messaging about cannabis – hasn’t yet been contemplated.
### Local health department context

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<th>Communi-cable Disease Control</th>
<th>Chronic Disease Control &amp; Injury Prevention</th>
<th>Environmental Public Health</th>
<th>Maternal Child Family Health</th>
<th>Access to Clinical Care</th>
<th>Vital Records</th>
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**Across all programs:**
- Assessment (surveillance and epidemiology)
- Emergency preparedness and response (all hazards)
- Communications
- Policy development and support
- Community partnership development
- Business competencies
Stage 2: Contemplation - we have a role in marijuana prevention?

- The change is being considered, “perhaps within about 6 months.”
- Pros – sure there are pros – but boy, the cons are really in my mind
Stage 3: Preparation – getting ready

• What are possible positions we could take?
  – Advocate for repeal
  – Stay out of it completely
  – Find a middle ground
Preparation stage, cont. - develop overarching county focus

• Ensure successful operation of a legalized recreational marijuana system, address voter direction under I-502 as well as equity and social justice by reducing disproportionality in arrest rates.
Preparation cont. - develop key principles

- Prevent youth access and use
- Ensure protection of public health
- Minimizing disproportionate siting and neighborhood impacts
Stage 4: Action – starting the behavior

- Present health messages in a credible and neutral way
- Support our partners and be careful
Stage 5: Maintenance – behavior is becoming a habit

• Self efficacy (confidence) is critical to on-going behavior – but questions remain before cannabis prevention communications is as solidified as other public health issues
Some of our key questions

- What prevention strategies work with which adolescents?
- Marijuana impacts on depression and anxiety for teens
- Pesticides and adulterants?
- Health impacts from high THC content products?
- How are land use policies impacting prevention?
Stages of Change

• This topic is new to health departments like mine
• As community health leaders, we will be called on to respond
• There is a period of learning, questioning, and defining
• Be open to all points of view within the department
• Need to stay neutral to be credible