State public health approaches to public education messaging for adult cannabis users

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Alaska’s Responsible Consumer Campaign
Disclosures

- One time funding from Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority for public education efforts
- No industry funding
Legalization in Alaska

- Ravin Doctrine (*Ravin v Alaska*, 1975) made marijuana quasi-legal >40 years ago
  - Alaska Supreme Court: right to privacy protected by the Alaska Constitution includes an adult’s right to possess and use small amounts of marijuana in the home

- Decriminalization flip-flop
  - Decriminalized by Legislature in 1982, up to 4 ounces
  - Recriminalized by ballot measure in 1990
  - Medical marijuana approved by ballot measure in 1998
  - Court of Appeals overturned ballot measure in 2000s
Legalization in Alaska

- Ballot Measure 2, November 2014: "An Act to Tax and Regulate The Production, Sale, and Use of Marijuana"

- Alaskans 21+ may possess up to 1 ounce and 6 plants

- Established Marijuana Control Board in Dept. of Commerce

- Defined tax at cultivation facility
  - $50/ounce; lower tax allowed for certain parts of plant

- Public consumption banned; fine up to $100

- Onsite consumption in licensed retailers passed, December 2018
  - Awaiting approval by Dept. of Law and Lt. Governor Meyer.
Legalization in Alaska

- 05/05/15 Law creating Marijuana Control Board signed
  - Regulations adopted

- First retail store opened in November 2016
  - Valdez, Fairbanks, Kenai, and Anchorage among the first stores

- Today: 253 active and operating licenses
  - 71 retail stores
  - 2 testing facilities (all on road system)
  - 159 cultivation facilities
  - 21 product or concentrate manufacturers
Medical Marijuana

- Legal in Alaska since 1998 for a number of specific “debilitating conditions”
- Statute does not address source of marijuana
- Public use prohibited, other restrictions; possession limits
- Requires permit (“Medical Marijuana Card”)
Marijuana education efforts were the responsibility of the Alaska Dept. of Health and Social Services, Division of Public Health

Post legalization no budget allocated for public health education efforts

- One time funding from Alaska Mental Health Trust Authority for formative research and paid media placement $80,000

Initial messaging utilized existing research and messages adapted from Colorado and Washington State
Marijuana is legal in Alaska. Here are some things you need to know.

21
If you’re under 21, it’s illegal to use or possess marijuana.

Marijuana can affect people differently.

Higher than you might think.

You can’t drive impaired. Driving high is a DUI.

Do not use if you are pregnant or breastfeeding.

Stash it safely away from kids and pets.

Talking with youth about marijuana

It’s important for parents to talk with their kids about marijuana early and often.

Get the Facts About Marijuana

Pregnancy, Breastfeeding and Marijuana
Marijuana and Your Baby

Get the Facts About Marijuana

Driving High is a DUI
Driving impaired is illegal and unsafe.

marijuana.dhs.alaska.gov

marijuana.dhs.alaska.gov

2019 North American Cannabis Summit
Past 30-day use by survey year, BRFSS 2015-2017, Adults (18+)

- **2015**: 16% All Alaska adults, 23% Alaska Native Adults, 16% White
- **2016**: 15% All Alaska adults, 24% Alaska Native Adults, 15% White
- **2017**: 19% All Alaska adults, 22% Alaska Native Adults, 17% White

*Figures represent percentages of past 30-day cannabis use among different groups in Alaska over the years 2015 to 2017.*
Past 30-day mode of use, 2015-2016, Adults (18+): 91.20% Smoked, 20.90% Eaten, 14.70% Vaped, 3.10% Drank, 8.80% Dabbled, 3.30% Other, 96.30% Smoked, 26.30% Eaten, 16.90% Vaped, 2.60% Drank, 14.30% Dabbled, 3.30% Other.
Marijuana Education 2017
Formative Research

- Campaign inventory and target audience analysis, to identify and refine our target audiences;

- Focus groups with members of the target audience, to identify promising messages and assess their perceptions of draft concepts; and

- Testing of message, to measure perceived effectiveness, levels of engagement, and message comprehension, and to check for unintended consequences.
What did we learn?

- Knowledge, Attitudes and Beliefs about Marijuana
  - Effects vary by mode of consumption

- Age of initiation 11-16 years old
  - Mean age 15 years old

- Use while Pregnant
  - 54% report use during pregnancy as relatively safe

- Marijuana Impaired Driving
  - 74% report ever driving after consumption (2-3 hours)
  - 33% drive frequently after consuming
  - 26% never drove after consuming
  - 69% agreed that marijuana impaired driving is dangerous
What did we learn?

- Participants were looking for messages that were not further stigmatizing or “making fun” of marijuana users.
- Participants were also looking for “normal” Alaskans to convey messages.
- 85% agreed that information regarding the law and information regarding responsible use would be helpful.
- Retailers identified as the trusted messenger to convey messages.
CONCEPT: IT ONLY TAKES ONE
This simplistic and straightforward concept boils down the legality of marijuana usage and bridges to educational messaging regarding edibles.

CONCEPT: RESPONSIBLE CONSUMER
This concept embraces Alaskans using marijuana now that it is legal, whether through smoking or edible consumption. Within a positive framework supported by facts, the concept will deliver messages that empower users to consume responsibly.

CONCEPT: KNOW THE RIGHT TIME
This concept recognizes that while marijuana is now legal in Alaska, there remain both right and wrong times to consume. The approach seeks to clearly communicate the basics of marijuana use without judgment.
Concept Testing

:30 TV: MARIJUANA MOM

Mom busyly works around the house, phones to take a hit of marijuana, goes about her chores. She checks her phone and realizes she is late to pick up her kids so she grabs her keys and bolts out the door.

Kids jump in the car and they are on their way home. Woman gets pulled over for a broken taillight. She trembles a bit with her IQ and smells of marijuana.

She fails a field sobriety test and is handcuffed as her kids watch helplessly from the backseat.

In Alaska, any amount of marijuana can lead to a DUI. If you consume, don't get behind the wheel. Get the facts on marijuana at marijuana.DHSS.alaska.gov.

:30 TV: TALKING DOG

Group hangs out at a house, eating marijuana brownies.
Guy 1: "Dude, I'm starving. I'm going to go grab some food.

Man heads toward the door with his keys. His dog runs over and trips him, knocking him over.
Friend 1: "Just order delivery. I've heard marijuana can get you a DUI and we have had a few brownies. They haven't even really hit me yet, but I know they will."

Man is lying on the floor, his dog licking his face. Man grabs his phone to order pizza.
Guy 1: "You're right. Delivery it is."

Dog: "Thanks, Jim. I love you...and pizza."

:30 TV: MAKE A CONNECTION

Two men sitting on couch playing a racing video game, enjoying marijuana edibles.
Guy 1: "Have anything else to eat?"
Guy 2: "Nah, let's pick something up. I'm good to drive."

Next we find out that while driving to get food, they hit a moose.
"Marijuana ruins your reaction time - effects could take hours to wear off. Especially if you're using edibles. It's illegal to consume or use any amount and drive. It could get you a DUI, or worse."
Responsible Consumer

WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT USING MARIJUANA IN ALASKA.

START LOW. GO SLOW.
WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MARIJUANA EDIBLES.

POTENCY VARIES FROM PRODUCT TO PRODUCT, SO START WITH A SMALL AMOUNT.

SINGLE SERVING SIZES OF PURCHASED EDIBLES HAVE UP TO 5 MILLIGRAMS OF THC.

THE EFFECTS CAN BE DELAYED UP TO TWO HOURS, AND LAST TWO HOURS OR MORE.

EDIBLES AFFECT EVERYONE DIFFERENTLY, START WITH A SMALL AMOUNT, WAIT BEFORE TRYING MORE.

SERVING SIZES VARY BY PRODUCT, READ PACKAGE LABELS AND PAY ATTENTION TO SIDE MARKS ON EDIBLES.

STAY SAFE. KNOW YOUR LIMITS.
Learn more about marijuana in Alaska.
marijuana.dhs.alaska.gov

Find us on Facebook.

2019 North American Cannabis Summit 17
Placement

- T.V.
  - Cable

- Digital
  - Programmatic National
    - 225,000 impressions per month - 1,800,000 total impressions
  - Video Pre-Roll
    - 75,000 impressions per month - 600,000 total impressions
  - Facebook.com
    - $500 budget per month
  - Google.com search
    - $500 budget per month
Planned Evaluation

- Digital panel to evaluate reach and effectiveness of campaign.
  - Specifically around safe storage; and
  - Marijuana impaired driving

- Tracking key metrics
  - A/B testing of social media
  - Impressions
  - Reach
  - Engagement
Future Campaign Direction

- Interested in continued collaboration with retailers on the topic of responsible use.
  - Shared public health goals and messages
    - conversations about youth prevention with trusted adults
    - use during pregnancy

- Partner with additional messengers
  - Parents
  - Health care providers
Key Takeaways

- “Cannabis culture” is rooted in counterculture movements that questioned messengers like us.
- One of our measures of success is meaningful engagement with marijuana users, avoiding messaging in a way that further polarizes.
- Education is the lowest hanging fruit – many marijuana users simply didn’t know the laws.
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