



White House Office of National Drug Control Policy National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign

MARIJUANA INITIATIVE

Marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug among America's youth. Yet many kids - and their parents - continue to see marijuana as benign, despite the accumulating scientific evidence of the harm it can cause. *Risks include health, social, academic, economic and legal consequences.* To dispel the myths and misconceptions about the drug, the Office of National Drug Control Policy has launched a comprehensive marijuana prevention initiative. The initiative targets parents, youth and key influencers, including physicians, nurses, educators, community leaders, social services providers, journalists and the entertainment industry.

The initiative focuses on debunking some of the most popular myths and misconceptions about the drug among parents and kids, such as:

Myth 1: Marijuana is harmless.

Myth 2: You can't get addicted to marijuana.

Myth 3: Marijuana won't hurt you - it's just a plant.

Myth 4: Marijuana doesn't make you lose control. It just makes you mellow.

Myth 5: Marijuana isn't as popular among youth today as other drugs like ecstasy.

Myth 6: There's not much parents or anyone else can do to stop youth from experimenting.

The Media Campaign has conducted a series of expert and stakeholder outreach meetings as well as qualitative research among youth and parents to inform the development of the initiative.

Advertising

The marijuana advertising for youth and parents has been extensively tested prior to airing.

Youth advertising campaign:

- **Available:** October 2002 through June 2003

- **Purpose:** To position marijuana as risky, providing kids ages 14-16 with the facts about marijuana, including the risks and negative consequences of using the drug.
- **Advertising components:** Television, radio and print and non-traditional advertising. Online advertising includes keywords on popular search engines such as Yahoo and banner ads on highly trafficked Web sites such as MTV.com. In-school messages will reach millions of teens through Channel One in-school television and publications, including Scholastic Teen Network and Weekly Reader.

Parent advertising campaign:

- **Launch:** Late September 2002 through December 2003
- **Purpose:** To reinforce efficacy and monitoring skills by emphasizing that parents can make a difference and by providing them with practical skills and strategies to raise drug-free kids. Advertising targets general market and African American adults.
- **Advertising components:** Television, radio, magazines, newspapers and online. Print ads will debunk common myths about marijuana and will be tagged with local organizations. Non-traditional advertising activities will also include a partnership with the National Football League, which will host "Drug Awareness Weeks" to support the marijuana initiative. The effort will include the airing of marijuana prevention ads in NFL stadiums and print ads in game-day programs.

Non-Advertising

The initiative includes a broad range of non-advertising activities designed to educate kids ages 14-16, parents and influential adults about the risks of youth marijuana use. Initial activities, primarily targeting parents and influential adults, include:

- **Partnerships** with highly respected youth-serving, parenting and health organizations such as the American Medical Association, the American Academy of Pediatrics, National PTA, National Association of State Alcohol/Drug Abuse Directors, Community Anti-Drug Coalitions of America and the National Crime Prevention Council.
- **News media outreach**, including a national launch press conference with Director Walters, Surgeon General Richard Carmona and partner organizations in Washington, D.C., on September 17, 2002.
- **Online resources**, including new educational features on the Media Campaign's Web sites for parents (TheAntiDrug.com); youth

(Freevibe.com); educators (TeachersGuide.org); entertainment writers (Drugstory.org); and corporate partners.

- **Multicultural outreach** to African American, Asian American, Hispanic and American Indian audiences.
- A series of educational **marijuana briefings** for journalists in seven cities.
- **Entertainment industry outreach**, including marijuana roundtables for entertainment writers and other special initiatives.
- **Classroom resources and activities** for teachers specifically focused on marijuana prevention, including a curriculum guide for middle and high school educators developed by *The New York Times* Newspaper in Education Program.
- **"Wake-Up Rallies"** in several cities, partnering with PRIDE and SADD youth groups.

Stakeholder Resources

A **Marijuana Awareness Kit** is available online at www.mediacampaign.org to help Campaign stakeholders conduct outreach in communities nationwide. The kit includes:

- Ideas for specific local activities and outreach
- Resources for communities
- Fact sheets and Op-Eds
- Feature stories for youth and parents
- Point-Counterpoint discussions for youth to youth and parents to kids
- Drug quizzes
- Radio PSAs

Additional resources for stakeholders include:

- Marijuana posters for teens and parents and marijuana pamphlet for parents
- Downloadable print and broadcast advertising from www.mediacampaign.org
- Online content for parents (TheAntiDrug.com); youth (Freevibe.com); educators (TeachersGuide.org); entertainment writers (Drugstory.org)
- PowerPoint presentation for speeches to groups such as civic organizations
- Video news release and B-roll footage
- CADCA "Strategizer" on marijuana

A **comprehensive backgrounder** on the marijuana initiative, "Making the Case: Why Kids Shouldn't Use Marijuana and What We Can Do About It," is also available. The backgrounder provides information about the effort and answers frequently asked questions.