

# Let's Be Clear Georgia

## A Collaborative to Prevent Marijuana Abuse

Let's Be Clear Georgia is a partnership of private and public agencies, employers, and individuals engaging in best practices and policies to prevent marijuana abuse in our state.

## MARIJUANA AND ADDICTION

### DRUG ADDICTION DEFINED

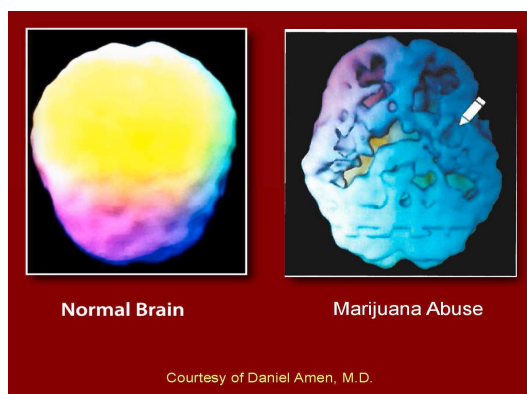
"Drug addiction is a disease of the brain that compels a person to become singularly obsessed with obtaining and abusing drugs despite their many adverse health and life consequences."<sup>1</sup>

### IS MARIJUANA ADDICTIVE?

Yes. "Over time, overstimulation of the endocannabinoid system by marijuana use can cause changes in the brain that lead to addiction."<sup>2</sup> Addiction to marijuana increases for users who start young (in their teens) and for daily users. According to the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), "marijuana accounted for 4.2 million of the estimated 6.9 million Americans dependent on or abusing illicit drugs."<sup>3</sup>

### MARIJUANA ADDICTION

Many people use marijuana at levels that cause abuse or addiction despite significant risks such as depression, schizophrenia and other forms of psychoses and increased risk of heart attack. People addicted to marijuana are also at higher risk for various mental health problems, respiratory diseases and short term memory loss. Marijuana users who try to quit experience similar symptoms that cigarette smokers experience such as irritability, anxiety, insomnia and depression. Many researchers have pointed to higher potency as a possible reason for skyrocketing treatment admissions rates globally for cannabis.<sup>4</sup> A key ingredient in marijuana, tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), is responsible for users feeling "high" and at higher levels is responsible for more harmful health effects. Today's marijuana is 4-5 times stronger than marijuana of the 60's and 70's.<sup>5</sup> Tolerance of and withdrawal from marijuana and THC develop with regular use.<sup>6</sup>



- This SPECT (Single Photon Emission Computerized Tomography) scan shows areas of activity and inactivity in the brain.
- The areas that appear as holes in the brain of the marijuana user indicate brain cell areas that are inactivated by the use of a drug.
- Scans have demonstrated a number of abnormalities in substance abusers in brain areas known to be involved in behavior, such as the frontal and temporal lobes.<sup>7</sup>

## WHAT GEORGIANS SHOULD KNOW

- 1) One in six adolescents and about one in 11 adults who try marijuana get addicted – keep in mind those numbers are from data more than 20 years old. It's quite likely that today's high-THC marijuana produces worse odds.
- 2) Marijuana is the #1 reason adolescents are admitted for substance-abuse treatment in the United States.
- 3) Males are more likely than females to be dependent on marijuana.

## SOURCES

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<sup>1</sup> "Addiction Science: From Molecules to Managed Care: NIDA Website Publications on the Science of Drug Abuse and Addiction" National Institute on Drug Abuse, July 2008

<sup>2</sup> Marijuana: NIDA Website Research Report Series on The Science of Drug Abuse and Addiction" National Institute on Drug Abuse <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/marijuana/marijuana-addictive>

<sup>3</sup> SAMHSA. Results from the 2013 National Survey on Drug Use and Health: summary of national findings. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration; 2014. HHS Publication No. (SMA) 14-4887. NSDUH Series H-49

<sup>4</sup> Compton, W., Grant, B., Colliver, J., Glantz, M., Stinson, F. (2004). Prevalence of Cannabis Use Disorders in the United States: 1991-1992 and 2001-2002 Journal of the American Medical Association.. 291:2114-2121. And Sabet, K. (2006). The (often unheard) case against cannabis leniency. In Pot Politics (Ed. M. Earleywine). Oxford University Press, pp. 325-355.

<sup>5</sup> Grass is Not Greener. Facts-Today's marijuana is 4-5 times stronger than marijuana of the 60's and 70's. Retrieved December 23, 2014 from [grassisnotgreener.com](http://grassisnotgreener.com)

<sup>6</sup> **"Marijuana Dependence – Signs of Marijuana Use Vs. Abuse, Tolerance: Dependency Website"** <http://www.dependency.net/learn/marijuana/>

<sup>7</sup> "Alcohol and Drug Abuse: Brain Pollution and the Real Reason You Shouldn't Use Drugs" Amen Clinics Website and High Resolution Brain SPECT Imaging in Marijuana Smokers with AD/HD, Journal of Psychoactive Drugs, Volume 30, No. 2 April-June 1998. Pgs 1-13 Dr. Amen.

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