



# Impact of Nonmedical Marijuana in K-12 School Settings

As 15 states have passed nonmedical marijuana laws (NMML), concern has emerged over the impact of these laws on K-12 school students and employees. This memo summarizes research findings on the impact of NMML to date.

“Before presenting this summary, two important caveats are in order: (1) there appear to be no studies that focus specifically on NMML impacts in a school setting—or in any specific workplace or educational environment; and (2) research on NMML impact is, in comparison with research on medical marijuana laws, still in its early stages. Many researchers in this field believe it will be a number of years—perhaps a decade or more—before the full effects of NMML will be understood.”

With those caveats in mind, the following are findings from a recent rigorous research review, “Review of Scientific Evidence on Effects of Medical and Non-Medical Marijuana Legalization on Public Health in the United States.”<sup>1</sup>

- “...findings thus far have indicated null effects of NMML on youth (cannabis) use.” (p. 23)
- “Studies of NMML thus far have indicated that cannabis use increases among adults following NMML enactment.” (p. 23)
- “...studies have not yet produced clear evidence of...NMML effects on heavy cannabis use (e.g., daily or near-daily past-month use).” (p. 23)
- “Studies of legalization effects on alcohol have produced consistent evidence that alcohol consumption decreases as a result of...NMML enactment, consistent with substitution (i.e., marijuana being used as a substitute for alcohol).” (p. 24)
- “Studies of effects of legalization on tobacco use, primarily cigarette smoking, have generally produced null effects for... NMML enactment.” (p. 24)
- “Effects of NMML on opioid mortality were also examined in two studies which produced null effects. ...studies of self-reported opioid misuse have generally indicated null effects...” (p. 24)

While these findings are generally encouraging, research will need to be monitored going forward, as this is a rapidly evolving area of knowledge.

► **For more information on Risk Program Administrators, please contact us at [info@riskprogramadministrators.com](mailto:info@riskprogramadministrators.com).**

<sup>1</sup>Adam Darnell, DDR Consulting, November 2020, available online at <https://en.ofdt.fr/BDD/publications/docs/ASTRACAN-Darnell-EN.pdf>. Note: Research reviews are particularly valuable in that they synthesize the results of a large number of studies, in this case, more than 80, including 18 previous reviews. Such reviews present the central tendency in an existing body of knowledge rather than focusing on a small number of possibly non-representative studies.