



American Drug Testing

Drug-Free Workplace Programs

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DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE ADVISOR

AN ONGOING SERIES TO PROTECT YOUR COMPANY BY HELPING TO KEEP DRUGS OUT OF YOUR WORK-

Marijuana: Workplace Risk, Part I

Marijuana is a green, brown, or gray mixture of dried, shredded leaves, stems, seeds, and flowers of the hemp plant (*Cannabis sativa*). Cannabis is a term that refers to marijuana and other drugs made from the same plant. Other forms of cannabis include sinsemilla, hashish, and hash oil. All forms of cannabis are mind-altering (psychoactive) drugs. The main active chemical in marijuana is THC (delta-9-tetrahydrocannabinol). Short-term effects of marijuana use include problems with memory and learning, distorted perception, difficulty in thinking and problem solving, loss of coordination, increased heart rate, and anxiety. Marijuana is usu-



ally smoked as a cigarette (called a joint) or in a pipe

“marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug”

or bong. Marijuana has also appeared in blunts, which are cigars that have been emptied of tobacco and refilled with marijuana, sometimes in combination with another drug, such as crack. It can also be mixed into foods or used to brew a tea.

Extent of Use

Marijuana is the most commonly used illicit drug. According to the 2007 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), an estimated 100 million Americans aged 12 or older have tried marijuana at least once in their lifetimes, representing 40.6% of the U.S. population in that age group. The number of past year marijuana users in 2007 was approximately 25.1 million (10.1% of the population aged 12 or older) and the number of past month marijuana users was 14.4 million (5.8%). Among 12-17 year olds surveyed as part of the 2007 NSDUH, 6.7% reported past

month marijuana use. Additional NSDUH results indicate that 16.4% of 18-25 year olds and 3.9% of those aged 26 or older reported past month use of marijuana. In 2007, there were 2.1 million persons who had used marijuana for the first time within the past 12 months; this averages to approximately 6,000 initiates per day. This estimate is similar to estimates from past NSDUH surveys dating back to 2002. A 2002 SAMHSA report, *Initiation of Marijuana Use: Trends, Patterns and Implications*, concludes that the younger children are when they first use marijuana, the more likely they are to use cocaine and heroin and become dependent on drugs as adults. The report found that 62% of adults age 26 or older who initiated marijuana before they were 15 years old reported that they had used cocaine in their lifetime. More than 9% reported they had used heroin and 53.9% reported non-medical use of psychotherapeutics. This compares to a 0.6% rate of lifetime use of cocaine, a 0.1% rate of lifetime use of heroin and a 5.1% rate of lifetime non-medical use of psychotherapeutics for those who never used marijuana. Increases in the likelihood of cocaine and heroin use and drug dependence are also apparent for those who initiate

use of marijuana at any

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later age. Source: Office of National Drug Control Policy. *Part II: Health Risks*

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