

# THE STATE OF CANNABIS POLICY IN CALIFORNIA'S CITIES & COUNTIES



Advancing Public Health & Equity in Cannabis Policy

## FACT SHEET

**WHAT:** California cities and counties can now measure how well their cannabis ordinances are protecting youth and supporting social equity in the first two years of legalization. New scorecards summarize cannabis policies in the 283 California cities and counties that have opted to permit retail sales, whether by storefront or delivery, of cannabis.

The scorecards bring light to a patchwork of local policies that continue to mostly fall far short of what public health leaders believe is necessary. In a legal market lacking that more solid foundation, dangerous products and practices, like ultra-high potency grape flavored vapes, billboards everywhere or invisible health warnings in 6-point font, will rapidly become entrenched, leading to a host of problems down the line.

**WHY:** Data from the National Study on Drug Use and Health shows statistically significant increases in cannabis use among California teens aged 12 to 17 between 2016/17 and 2018/19. Past year cannabis use in this age group rose from 13% up to 16%, while past month use went from 7% up to 9%—a 26 percent increase in the proportion of teens using cannabis monthly.

According to the Surgeon General, cannabis can have several negative effects on the adolescent brain, including problems with memory and learning, and impaired coordination.

The National Academies of Science, Engineering and Medicine concluded there was substantial evidence that cannabis use is associated with:

- Low birth weight, if used during pregnancy
- Motor vehicle accidents
- Psychosis and schizophrenia
- Problem use, especially when used at a young age or frequently.

These effects can have a strong impact on community public safety, including increased auto accident rates due to consumers driving under the influence. Emerging evidence also suggests higher rates of other mental health issues, including depression and suicidal ideation.

To mitigate these issues, cities and counties that choose to legalize retail sales of cannabis should adopt a set of common sense, evidence-based cannabis policies to fulfill our collective responsibility to protect youth and promote social equity as soon as possible.

**WHO:** **Getting it Right from the Start**, a project of the Public Health Institute, works with states, cities, counties and community partners to develop evidence-based model policies and provide guidance on cannabis policies that can help reduce harms, protect against youth and problem cannabis use, and advance social equity.



### Model Ordinances

Developing model local ordinances for licensing cannabis retailers, marketing, and general and special taxes on cannabis.



### Research

Carrying out research with local and national stakeholders and experts to identify best practices.



### Legal Analyses

Developing legal analyses of relevant issues for licensing, constraints on marketing and taxation.



### Technical Resources

Managing a national listserv, providing webinars, presentations, visits & other TA tools that support communities, educating policymakers & sharing experiences.



### Public Health Input

Providing public health-oriented input to regulatory processes and supporting other stakeholders to do so.

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