A 2012 Columbia University study concluded that adolescents in states with medical marijuana laws have higher levels of marijuana use. Youth in medical marijuana states also have lower perceptions of the risks connected to using marijuana than young people who live in non-medical marijuana states.

Issues Related to Marijuana Use in Young People

- One in six youth who use marijuana will become addicted, and with regular use, youth may suffer the permanent IQ loss of 6 to 8 points.

- Of the 902 youth who received County of Santa Clara outpatient and residential substance use treatment in fiscal year 2012/13, 742 reported marijuana as their primary substance abuse problem. Another 110 reported alcohol as their primary problem.

- In the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 21% of youth who reported that they used marijuana in the past month also carried a handgun in the last year. Only 6% of youth who did not use in the past month carried a handgun.

- In 2012, an estimated 43.8% of youth had stolen or tried to steal something worth over $50 in the past year had used illicit drugs in the past month. This is compared to 8.2% of those who had not used illicit drugs in the past month.

- Youth that smoke marijuana every weekend for two years are almost six times more likely to drop out of high school than nonsmokers. They are also more than three times less likely to enter college than nonsmokers and more than four times less likely to earn a college degree.

- In a study of twins, the marijuana-using twin showed long term effects on their cognitive abilities, including perception, reasoning and judgment compared to the non-using twin.

- Individuals who use marijuana are several times more likely to develop schizophrenia and psychoses compared to those who have not used.

Medical Marijuana Cards

A 2011 study found that few medical marijuana applicants in California had cancer, HIV/AIDS, glaucoma, multiple sclerosis or any other serious illness that might be helped by marijuana.

The FDA has never approved smoking as a safe delivery system for medication because there is no way to standardize the dose.
Can Marijuana Use Lead to More Serious Drug Use?
A 2003 study in Australian, published in the Journal of the American Medical Association, was conducted with same-sex twins: one had used marijuana before age 17 and one had never used marijuana. The marijuana-using twin was five times more likely to go on to use hallucinogens like LSD, three times more likely to go on and use cocaine, and twice as likely to use heroin, compared to the twin that never-used.12

Impact on Youth where Marijuana has been Legalized
A Denver Post article (Nov 11, 2013) reported that, “In two years of work as an undercover officer with a drug task force, Mike Dillon encountered plenty of drugs. But nothing has surprised him as much as what he is seeing in schools. Dillon, who is now a school resource officer with the Mesa County Sheriff’s Department, said he is seeing more and younger kids bringing marijuana to schools, in sometimes-surprising quantities. ‘When we have middle school kids show up with a half an ounce, that is shocking to me,’ Dillon said. The same phenomenon is being reported around Colorado after the 2010 regulation of medical marijuana dispensaries and the 2012 vote to legalize recreational marijuana.”13

Does Legalizing Substances Generate Income?
The United States gains about $15 to $20 billion a year in alcohol taxes but loses over $200 billion a year in health care, criminal justice and other costs directly related to alcohol use. The $25 billion paid in tobacco taxes does not begin to cover the $200 billion in lost social costs that are attributed to tobacco use.14

References
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