



## **MARIJUANA – ADVERSELY AFFECTS YOUNG PEOPLE**

### ***Major impact on academic achievement, motivation and productivity***

*By Roger Morgan, Exec Director, Coalition for A Drug-Free California*

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America has the highest high school drop out rate of all industrialized nations (President Obama). Nationally, one-third (1.2 million kids) drop out. Preventing abuse of alcohol, tobacco and drugs is no longer an option, but a necessity, if we are to retain our standing as a nation.

Marijuana diminishes ones capacity to absorb and retain information, contributes to depression, suicide, psychosis, addiction and leads many young people to a life of chaos, crime and corruption. It is a contributing factor to the high school drop out rate. Increasing the availability of marijuana and use through legalization will further exacerbate the problem.

Addiction to alcohol, tobacco and drugs (ATOD) is called a *pediatric onset disease*, because it almost always starts with young people. At age 10 to 18 years old, their bodies and brains are not fully developed and are much more vulnerable to harm and addiction. Chronic marijuana use by young people can cause irreversible damage to the brain.

UC Santa Barbara recently conducted a study that showed in **California the high school dropout rate averaged 24.2%, at a cost to taxpayers of \$46.4 billion .... \$392,000 per dropout.** Robert DuPont, Institute for Behavior and Health, conducted research that indicates a range of \$243,000 to \$388,000 per drop out, but when combined with heavy drug use and associated crime the costs ranged from \$1.7 to \$2.3 million per drop out. Nationally, the cost is roughly \$500 billion a year, or more.

The UC Santa Barbara study revealed also that 80% of prison inmates in California are high school dropouts. **The \$8 billion prison overcrowding problem** in California is largely related to the lack of academic achievement and jobs for unskilled workers, forcing them to crime. Marijuana is a factor, and the most commonly abused drug.

The early onset of alcohol, tobacco and drug use is not the only barrier to enhanced academic achievement, but it is a major factor. The best education is wasted on a young person that surrenders his or her life to addiction. The legal drugs of alcohol and tobacco already take a heavy toll on society and there is no justification for legalizing and proliferating the use of another mind altering drug.