

# Position Statement on the Ongoing Need to Monitor and Assess the Public Health and Safety Consequences of Legalizing Cannabis

Approved by the Board of Trustees, July 2022

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“Policy documents are approved by the APA Assembly and Board of Trustees.... These are...position statements that define APA official policy on specific subjects....” – *APA Operations Manual*

### Issue:

The American Psychiatric Association (APA) strongly urges responsible federal and state authorities to measure and monitor the health and safety consequences of policies enacted by states that legalize the cultivation, distribution, and possession of cannabis and to fund relevant research. Particular attention should be paid to the effects of every form of legalization on the prevalence and consequences of recreational use, especially among children and adolescents.

### APA Position:

- **Measures should be taken to identify the key outcomes related to the health and safety consequences of cannabis legalization, the best available measures of these outcomes, and the protocols needed to ensure unbiased tracking. Examples of consequences to be tracked include rates of youth use, overdose, emergency department visits, and driving under the influence (DUI), as well as trends in the prevalence of cannabis use disorder and other substance use disorders in the population.**
- **States legalizing cannabis should collect and report the data needed to monitor and measure the health and safety consequences of their policies and take precautionary steps to ameliorate adverse health and safety consequences. In addition to public health consequences, social justice effects, such as incarceration rates and DUI arrests, should also be monitored, especially in minority populations.**
- **Federal oversight of the cultivation, distribution, and possession of cannabis should be adequate to protect the health, safety, and welfare of the American people, including through stricter oversight, testing, and guidelines regarding levels of tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and other psychoactive compounds in cannabis products. Changes should be made to applicable federal laws and regulations to permit and strengthen the oversight and monitoring of well-designed research by institutional review boards to improve the scientific quality of research on the potential medical effects of cannabis.**

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