



Gov. Inslee: Keeping marijuana away from teens top focus for state leaders

Gov. Inslee, Attorney General Ferguson, other state agencies announce safety and public awareness measures in preparation for opening retail marijuana stores

OLYMPIA – Gov. Jay Inslee today was joined by Attorney General Bob Ferguson, Liquor Control Board Chair Sharon Foster and other state agency leaders to announce new rules and public awareness efforts to keep cannabis out of the hands of those under 21 years old.

The LCB will issue the first retail licenses July 7, with retail sales of recreational marijuana to soon follow. From public service announcements and parent guides to new rules for packaging and labeling, Inslee and Ferguson said state leaders are united in their commitment to keep recreational marijuana from young people. The effort is essential for public health and safety, and should reassure federal authorities that Washington state is implementing its marijuana market in the most responsible fashion possible.

“This is an all-hands-on-deck effort to make sure we keep kids safe,” Inslee said. “We want every retailer to know that kids are off limits and every parent to know how to talk to kids about why cannabis isn’t safe.”

Washington legalized recreational cannabis when state voters approved Initiative 502 in November 2012.

“The initiative legalized marijuana only for adults 21 and over and it is incumbent on everyone — retailers, parents, health professionals and public officials — to do everything possible to keep pot away from kids,” Inslee said. “If we fail in that, Washington’s regulated, retail market for marijuana may fail, too.”

That message was reinforced by Attorney General Bob Ferguson.

“The Attorney General’s Office has a history of holding businesses accountable when they illegally market tobacco or alcohol to youth — and we intend to treat Washington’s new marijuana businesses no differently,” Ferguson said. “The federal government sent a strong message to Washington and Colorado that we must enforce against underage access to marijuana. Today’s announcements send a strong message: Marijuana may be legal in Washington — but it is still not legal for kids.”

LCB staff will propose new rules tomorrow that detail new labeling and packaging requirements to minimize the appeal to children and promote consumer safety. The LCB is expected to also adopt emergency rules that require label approval of all edible products to ensure they are not especially appealing to children, require homogenization and serving-size scoring of all edible products and require an identifier on all edibles that they contain cannabis.

LCB rules already prohibit packaging with cartoons or depictions of children, and require that labels must include milligrams of active THC, lot and batch numbers, a complete list of ingredients and more.

“Consumer and public safety are central to Washington’s tightly regulated system,” said LCB’s Foster.

In addition, state agencies announced new public safety campaigns to help consumers, parents and teens get educated about recreational marijuana products.



The Department of Social and Health Services is preparing educational materials to inform parents and teens about the risks of marijuana use.

“DSHS has partners across the state to keep our children healthy, safe and successful, but there is one thing we can’t do and that is parent your children,” said Jane Beyer, assistant secretary for the DSHS Behavioral Health and Service Integration Administration. “Parents are the most powerful influence in their children’s lives. Teens care about what parents say and they don’t want to disappoint them. Tell your kids that their brains are still developing. Marijuana can impair memory and learning. It can limit their athletic performance. It impairs coordination and reaction time, and it can increase their risk for sports injuries. And tell them that marijuana is the most common drug involved in auto fatalities.”

In addition, the state Department of Health is running a \$400,000 statewide education campaign featuring ads on radio and digital media that encourage parents to talk to their kids about the health risks of using marijuana. The radio ad features Dr. Leslie Walker of Seattle Children’s Hospital urging parents to talk about the health risks of using marijuana and referring them to online information at www.learnaboutcannabiswa.org/.

A Spanish language version of the radio ad featuring Children’s Dr. Natalia Jimenez will air beginning June 30.

“We’re concerned about the health of young people who use marijuana,” said State Health Officer Dr. Kathy Lofy. “Teens who use marijuana regularly are at higher risk for addiction and are more likely to get lower grades in school. We want parents to talk with their kids about making healthy choices, and do it now; don’t wait.”

These new campaigns follow on the heels of the “[Drive High. Get a DUI](#)” campaign launched this week by the Washington Traffic Safety Commission and coincide with summer DUI emphasis patrols by local law enforcement agencies and the Washington State Patrol also funded through the WTSC.

DSHS is also reminding the public to contact the [Washington Recovery Help Line](#) at 1-866-789-1511 for free, confidential referrals to treatment and prevention programs.