This trends report seeks to identify opportunities to engage the community in youth marijuana prevention.

The human brain is not fully developed until the mid-20’s. Studies have shown that if an adolescent uses marijuana, also referred to as cannabis, before the age of 16 and for a prolonged period of time, it can lead to a number of significant health problems. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), long-term cannabis use can have permanent effects on the developing brains of adolescents and young adults. Teen marijuana users are more likely to become addicted to marijuana than people who start using the drug when they are older. Cannabis use can negatively affect adolescents’ and young adults’ health and well-being at a critical point in their lives, including their school performance, education level, social lives, and future employment and income. [https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/nas/adolescents.html](https://www.cdc.gov/marijuana/nas/adolescents.html)

**Prevalence**


- 23% of La Crosse County high school students reported ever using marijuana.
- Youth are using marijuana (13%) at almost the same rate they are vaping (14%).
- Among students who used marijuana, 15% started using before age 13.
- Such students are also more likely to report indicators of trauma, violence, or abuse.

**Health Equity Prevalence**

2019 WI Youth Risk Behavior Survey, La Crosse County Youth Risk Behavior Survey High School Results, pages 100, 111, 116, 131

Some students tend to be at higher risk than their peers:

- More LGBT youth begin using marijuana prior to age 13 and report using marijuana in the past 30 days at double the rate of straight/Cisgender.
- Students who have experienced hunger due to lack of food at home begin using marijuana before age 13 at twice the rate of students who have not experienced food insecurity at home.
- Black/African American and Hispanic students begin using marijuana prior to age 13 more than double the rate of white students. In the past 30 days, 1 in 4 Black/African American students used marijuana, 1 in 5 Hispanic students used marijuana and 1 in 8 white students used marijuana.
- Male students tended to use marijuana before the age of 13 at almost double the rate of females.

**Perception of Harm = Susceptibility**

La Crosse County Youth Risk Behavior survey, High School Results Summary, 2010 – 2017

- 59% of high school students in 2017 reported believing there to be little to no risk when smoking marijuana, up from 38% in 2010.
- 83% of high school students in 2017 reported that their parents would feel it was wrong or very wrong for them to smoke marijuana, down from 89% in 2013.
In 2019, hospitalizations & ER visits due to marijuana use increased.

The most common reasons for hospitalizations are: cannabis hyperemesis syndrome, Butane hash oil burns, toxicity, and intoxication.

Hospitalizations for marijuana (THC) were greater than all other drugs amongst ages 12 – 17 and 18 – 24.