

Addictions Foundation of Manitoba Position Statement on the Legalization of Non-Medical Cannabis

The legalization of non-medical cannabis in Canada has the potential to increase use of the drug as well as the related harms and risks. Cannabis use is associated with health, social, legal, and economic harms. The Addictions Foundation of Manitoba (AFM) is thereby committed to working with stakeholders to recommend a comprehensive public health approach with strong regulation to reduce cannabis related harms and risks.

- As a health care provider, a Crown agency and a provincial leader in addictions services, AFM has a critical role in preventing the harms and risks of cannabis use, informing Manitobans of these harms and risks, and being a leader in evidence based policy and approaches in addictions. Reducing cannabis related harms and risks reflects the mission, vision and values of AFM, including the obligation to address the changing needs of clients and reduce the demand for addiction services.
- Cannabis use has risks – it is a potentially harmful drug that is associated with significant harms in the areas of **health** (e.g., injuries, disease, mental illness, developmental impairment), **social** issues (e.g., family challenges), **legal** issues (e.g., drugged driving), and **economics** (e.g., work absenteeism, health costs) – particularly as it relates to youth and to impaired driving.
- Cannabis risks and harms are related to **drug potency, frequency of use, age of initiation, health status, family history, length of use and activities that place individuals at risk**. The most effective way to avoid the drug's risks and harms is not using non-medical cannabis.
- AFM does not endorse the use of cannabis, but recommends a comprehensive public health approach with strong regulation to the federal government's legalization of non-medical cannabis.
- Within the legalization context, the most effective model to reduce these risks and harms is to implement a comprehensive public health model with strong regulation at all levels – the **production, distribution and use** of the drug. This approach prioritizes public safety over financial profit from cannabis.
 - A **public health** approach includes data gathering and analysis; evidence informed decision making; prevention, education, early intervention programs and addiction treatment designed to reduce cannabis related harms.
 - **Strong regulation** includes consistent *checks and balances* that are designed to protect the public from cannabis related harms and risks. Examples include standards and legislation on minimum age of purchase, store density and location, labeling, advertising, inspections of production facilities and where people smoke marijuana.