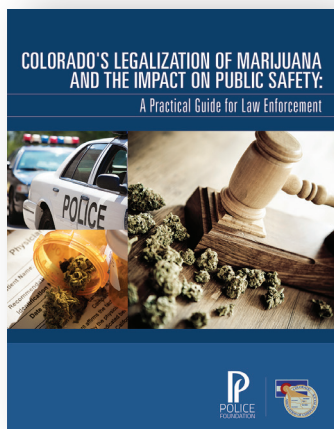


# 5 THINGS YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION'S IMPACT ON PUBLIC SAFETY

Colorado legalized recreational marijuana use in 2012 – and the state's residents became the first to legally grow and possess marijuana for non-medical use in January 2014. The state legalized medical marijuana use in 2000, and was one of the first to allow commercial sales for medical use in 2009.

Across our nation law enforcement executives are building knowledge and expertise to address the unexpected consequences of marijuana legalization. Three other states – Washington, Oregon, and Alaska – have legalized recreational marijuana, and other state and local jurisdictions have been dealing with the secondary impacts of Colorado's marijuana legalization law.



The Police Foundation and the Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police have partnered to share Colorado's challenges, successes, and lessons learned in a practical guide to legalized marijuana for law enforcement. The guide is available at [www.policefoundation.org/colorado-marijuana-guidebook](http://www.policefoundation.org/colorado-marijuana-guidebook)



## 1 MARIJUANA LEGALIZATION CREATES MORE RATHER THAN LESS LAW ENFORCEMENT CHALLENGES FOR POLICE OFFICERS AND SHERIFF'S DEPUTIES.

Legalization creates new resource needs because officers must address crime and disorder issues associated with the new law. "Driving under the influence" testing requires new training and policies. Determining the difference between legal amounts and uses of marijuana requires review and more training. Safety training must be increased because of "legal" but unsafe processing operations. Homeless shelters report an increase in out-of-state homeless youth, drawn by legal marijuana, who are creating other crime problems, according to media accounts.



## 2 LAW ENFORCEMENT FACES A NEW CHALLENGE IN EDUCATING THE PUBLIC ON THE CONTINUING RISKS OF MARIJUANA.

Because the public believes legal marijuana is safe to use, law enforcement leaders face a new challenge in alerting the public to the continued safety and health risks. The message to the public can no longer simply be "marijuana is illegal," but must emphasize the public safety problems that legal marijuana causes.



## 3 MARIJUANA CULTIVATIONS CREATE HIGH RISKS TO LAW ENFORCEMENT, GROWERS, RESIDENTS AND COMMUNITIES THAT ARE HOME TO CULTIVATION FACILITIES.

"Hash oil" extraction operations involve highly flammable and potentially explosive solvents such as butane and alcohol. The result can be as dangerous to law enforcement and the public as methamphetamine labs. As marijuana availability increases, these extraction operations can create this danger in urban and suburban communities. Also, many marijuana cultivators ignore standard building codes, increasing the potential for fire with poorly installed electrical and ventilation systems.



## 4 NEW PRODUCTION METHODS CAN INCREASE THE HEALTH RISKS OF MARIJUANA USE.

The increased potency of marijuana, combined with widespread "edible" versions in baked goods and candy, have increased the risk of people overdosing on edible THC. Emergency rooms have documented a growing number of THC overdoses, with patients experiencing psychotic episodes, excited delirium, or heightened anxiety. Additionally, the packaging and marketing of products are directed to youth with candy, cookies, soda pop, and like products. A marijuana user has over four times the risk of a heart attack for up to an hour after smoking the drug. Driving impairment can last up to 24 hours after ingestion.



## 5 YOUTH MARIJUANA USE MAY SOON BECOME A PUBLIC HEALTH PROBLEM RIVALING YOUTH ALCOHOL USE

Marijuana legalization increases availability of the drug and especially decreases youth perception of health risks, mirroring the trends of teen consumption of alcohol. Youth are especially vulnerable for both health and safety reasons. Researchers at Northwestern University and Harvard Medical Center have demonstrated youth marijuana use causes permanent brain impairment during critical growth stages during adolescents; decreases IQ as much as 8 points; increases delinquency and risky behavior; and increases suicidal thoughts.