

Hallucinogenic herb a problem in Wash.

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Both Washington state and U.S. officials are growing increasingly concerned over the popularity of a legal hallucinogenic herb in the region around Seattle.

An herb from the mint family, Salvia Divinorum has become a popular drug of choice with many Washington teenagers and its reported ability to make its users hallucinate and forget has many officials concerned, Seattle's KIRO-TV reported.

"Just because it's legal, just because it's not classified, just because it's not a controlled substance doesn't mean that it's healthy and safe," DEA official Rodney Benson said.

The herb, whose origins are in Mexican spiritual ceremonies, has already been linked to the suicide of a teen in Delaware, prompting officials there to ban the hallucinogen.

Benson said with the herb growing in popularity in the suburbs of Seattle, scientists are working quickly on determining if the herb should be deemed a controlled substance.

Until that decision can be made and authorities can act, Benson told the TV station area parents should inform their children of potential risks, including violent behavior and hallucinations.

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