

Marijuana use amongst youth stable, but substance abuse admissions up

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While marijuana use amongst youth remains stable, youth admission to substance abuse treatment facilities has increased, according to new research from Binghamton University, State University of New York.

Miesha Marzell, assistant professor of social work at Binghamton University, along with researchers at The University of Iowa, did a secondary analysis of data collected from every nationally funded [substance abuse treatment](#) facility in the United States from 2003-2013. The data covered admissions before and after major marijuana policies were enacted nationwide. The team's analysis showed that while marijuana use amongst youth has remained relatively unchanged, admissions to substance abuse treatment facilities has increased.

"Teens were being admitted to substance abuse treatment centers across the United States, but they were not necessarily indicating that their marijuana use was at a high-risk," said Marzell.

As to why numbers are up, Marzell says that it could be that people are seeing any kind of use as high-risk and want to make sure that, from a prevention standpoint, that they stay on top of it.

"As states legalize, it provides a different access to this drug. It could be that people are reporting any type of use now as risky, whereas before it wasn't on the minds of people as much," she said.

While Marzell notes that any marijuana that a youth does is illegal and high-risk, experimenting with one joint, for example, doesn't necessarily warrant substance abuse treatment. Marzell said that placing youth in substance abuse treatment unnecessarily can have negative impacts on their life trajectory, as they can be stigmatized.

"It might not be the best course of action for a drug behavior. If you get a splinter, you don't put a cast on; if you break your arm, you put a cast on. It's this overreaction. And it's also not a good use of funds, because treatment is expensive...We want to make sure that we're using all of our resources in an appropriate way," she said.

Marzell said that as [marijuana laws](#) continue to change around the country, more research needs to be conducted.

"I think that what needs to be done is more research on changing [marijuana](#) policies and [youth](#) behavior and outcomes specifically related to [treatment](#). There needs to be more drug education, but substance [abuse treatment](#) might not necessarily be warranted," she said.

The paper, "Trends of Youth Marijuana Treatment Admissions: Increasing Admissions Contrasted with Decreasing Drug Involvement," was published in *Substance Use & Misuse*.

More information: Miesha Marzell et al, Trends of Youth Marijuana Treatment Admissions: Increasing Admissions Contrasted with Decreasing Drug Involvement, *Substance Use & Misuse* (2017). [DOI: 10.1080/10826084.2017.1311349](#)

Provided by Binghamton University

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