

Association of Student Assistance Professionals of New Jersey (ASAP-NJ)

POSITION STATEMENT

“Youth Rite of Passage – Impact of Marijuana Legalization”

Written By: Alysia Fornarotto-Regenye, MSW, LCADC, SAC, SSW on behalf of ASAP-NJ (May 2018)

Monmouth County Student Assistance Coordinator

Twitter: @NJ_YRP_IML

Email: nj.yrp.iml.collaborative@gmail.com

New Jersey cannot afford to waste time debating legalization, there is a ***decrease in perception of harm among youth*** here in New Jersey since Colorado and other states legalized marijuana leading to a heightened “*Youth Rite of Passage*” among New Jersey teens. ***Leave youth out of the equation on legalization of marijuana? Impossible.*** Legalizing marijuana goes beyond any adult using a mind-altering drug in “moderation.” The goal in the field of Substance Abuse Prevention has long been to increase protective factors and decrease risk factors, creating a positive imbalance of protective factors outweighing risk factors. Providing teenagers with easier access to marijuana through parental and other family members’ use, peer use, and street dealers who will continue to sell in communities, will only increase the number of young people abusing substances and who *will* have difficulty socially, emotionally and academically in completing high school and college with any ease. It will increase problems in achieving healthy biological, psychological and cognitive brain development; along with healthy social and personal maturation. The future of our youth and society lies in the heightened “*Youth Rite of Passage,*” and the decisions we make today, make it a responsible decision for New Jersey youth.

Nationally, Adolescent Addiction rests upon the conscience of policy makers across the United States and now in New Jersey. The Association of Student Assistance Professionals of New Jersey (ASAP-NJ), recognizes the critical need as a collective group to publicly request Governor Murphy, before moving forward with legalization of marijuana, to consider implementing a statewide Physical, Mental and Academic Wellness focused “*Youth Rite of Passage-Impact of Marijuana Legalization Advisory Committee,*” which must include full participation from the Department of Education and other educational-based associations; along with other identified State and local agencies’ guidance, much like the current ASAP-NJ’s New Jersey “*Youth Rite of Passage – Impact of Marijuana Legalization*” **Statewide Collaborative.**

Legalization of marijuana will have a direct impact not just on the youth who attend schools across New Jersey, but ***within the walls of our school classroom environments,*** they will be directly impacted with a steady increase in students coming to school under the influence of marijuana or worse, easily concealed vaping marijuana on school grounds, leading to additional issues administration, staff, faculty, law enforcement and parents will need to consider. ASAP-NJ requests that every elementary school, middle school and high school building have a minimum of one Student Assistance Coordinator/Counselor (SAC) with Advanced Standing providing drug and alcohol prevention education and screening, brief interventions and referrals to treatment and recovery services when necessary.



Association of Student Assistance Professionals of New Jersey (ASAP-NJ)

Website: www.asapnj.org

Email: asapnjboard@gmail.com

Lori Todd, President
Amy Rock, Secretary

Pam Felder, 1st VP
James Foley, Treasurer

Donna Gaudio, 2nd VP
Scott Isaacs, Parliamentarian