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AN URGENT CONVERSATION ABOUT CANNABIS (MARIJUANA) AND THE DANGERS OF DELTA-8 THC PRODUCTS

Dear Parents/Guardians and Educators:

A new health threat has emerged with a new and unregulated substance related to cannabis (marijuana) called delta-8 THC (tetrahydrocannabinol). Delta-8 THC products have not been evaluated or approved by the FDA for safe use in any context. They may be marketed in ways that put the public health at risk and should especially be kept out of reach of children and pets. We are sharing this information to equip students, parents, educators, and health providers across Los Angeles County with the knowledge and tools needed to understand the risks of delta-8 THC as a means to promote health and safety.

Delta-8 THC is one of over 100 cannabinoids produced naturally by the cannabis plant but is not found in significant amounts in the cannabis plant. As a result, concentrated amounts of delta-8 THC are typically synthesized, using additional chemicals, from hemp-derived cannabidiol (CBD). Delta-8 THC is a euphoric, psychoactive substance which is consumed in the form of gummies, vape cartridges, and other products commonly available in gas stations, convenience stores, tobacco shops, and cannabis dispensaries. Amid the growing popularity of cannabis products, scientists and public health experts are alarmed about the rising use of delta-8 THC and concerned about harmful health consequences, particularly from youth exposures. Other synthetic cannabinoid by-products produced during the process of synthesizing delta-8 THC are also a notable concern, as the safety and health effects of these by-products have not been established.

Under federal law, hemp products – which include delta-8 THC – are legal and are presently unregulated, meaning that they can be sold with no age restrictions. Regardless of the legality of delta-8 THC, the use of delta-8 THC products can cause adverse health effects, including:

- Lethargy (Fatigue/Sluggishness)
- Uncoordinated movements and decreased activity
- Slurred speech
- Increased heart rate progressing to
- slowed heart rate
- Low blood pressure
- Difficulty breathing
- Sedation
- Coma

Given the current unregulated state of delta-8 THC, there are variations in product content, manufacturing practices, and labeling that contribute to misunderstandings regarding the psychoactive properties and health effects of delta-8 THC.¹

From December 2020 through July 2021, the FDA received adverse event reports from both consumers and law enforcement describing patients who consumed delta-8 THC products, many of whom presented to a hospital or emergency room for treatment. In 2020, there were 1,173 calls to the Poison Control Center for services related to the ingestion of cannabis products among children aged 0 – 19. California has also seen a rise in emergency room visits related to cannabis poisoning among young children. In 2016, there were approximately 21 visits per one million Californians aged 0 – 5 compared to approximately 113 visits in 2020.²

Recommendations for Parents and Consumers:

- Consumers should be aware of possible limitations in the labeling of products containing cannabis-related substances, including products that obtain THC and CBD from approved marijuana and hemp retailers.
- Consumers should be aware that products labeled as hemp or CBD may contain delta-8 THC and that using products containing delta-8 THC can result in cannabis intoxication.
- Parents who consume edibles and other products that contain THC and/or CBD should store them safely away from children.
- If you suspect that your child has accidentally consumed these products, monitor them for symptoms of intoxication.
- If consumers experience adverse effects of THC- or CBD-containing products that are an immediate danger to their health, they should call their local or regional poison control center at 800-222-1222 or 911 or seek medical attention at their local emergency room and report the ingredients of ingested products to healthcare providers.
- Talk to your children about the dangers of delta-8 THC and other substances. As the cannabis marketplace continues to evolve, other cannabis-derived products of potential concern have also emerged as safety concerns for our youth. Many publications are available to inform these crucial conversations that parents have with their children. For example, *Growing Up Drug Free: A Parent's Guide to Substance Use Prevention*³ is a publication jointly produced by U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration and the U.S. Department of Education that includes an overview of substance use among children, youth, and young adults, descriptions of substances young people may use, risk and protective factors, along with suggestions for how to talk to young people about alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.

We appreciate your collective efforts to support our communities and reverse this dangerous trend.

Sincerely,



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¹ <https://www.fda.gov/consumers/consumer-updates/5-things-know-about-delta-8-tetrahydrocannabinol-delta-8-thc>

² <https://oag.ca.gov/news/press-releases/attorney-general-bonta-cannabis-infused-edibles-packaged-popular-food-and-candy>

³ https://www.getsmartaboutdrugs.gov/sites/getsmartaboutdrugs.com/files/publications/GUDF_Guide_508.pdf