



## CONNECTICUT SOCIAL EQUITY COUNCIL

### The 2025 Council Market Outlook Working Group

#### Youth Champions Subcommittee - First Working Session RECAP

Wednesday, October 29, 2025 at 4:30 pm

#### Group 1-Southwest CT

##### 1. Understanding the Youth Perspective (Increased Awareness and Education)

- Defining the term young adult/youth are we speaking about age 18+ or younger.
- Children are not able to handle the responsibility of smoking (overuse) showing up in public spaces smelling of weed. There is a lack of education on what is appropriate in the weed user culture.
- The science: ages 14-25 cannabis use is bad for brain development. The marketing around cannabis is more powerful than the education and science.
- There was such a focus on the decriminalization of weed that less thought was given to the effects of weed use in the school.
  - Students are being expelled for marijuana use and vaping which is causing referrals to juvenile justice programing and additional issues.
- Youth are using marijuana to deal with other issues such as anxiety, fitting in etc. but no one is address what the core reason for them using it is and they are becoming addicted.
- Anti-cannibals campaign
- The age of youth using marijuana is very alarming it has become a part of cultures.
- Younger kids are exposed to it and it is advertised attractively (gummies).
- Lack of parent education-basic knowledge that cannabis is a drug. Re-looking at the tone of the cannabis conversation that is it safe compared to being relatively safe.
- Resources: [beintheknowct.org/youth](https://beintheknowct.org/youth) and [catalystct.org/the-hud/cannabis](https://catalystct.org/the-hud/cannabis)



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#### 2. Inform policy recommendations

Enforcement of Vape Shops illegal activities which brings many frustrations from law enforcement.

Marketing and messaging should be at the level of the youth so that it is relevant. We need data from school and ER visits.

Smokes shops are creating environments and cultural of an underground smoking community where people are receiving multiple highs.

Empowering municipalities to regulate smoke shops understand that is a business and owners are not impacted by fines.

Enough education for teachers, guidance and providers etc. but not using scare tactics.

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#### Group 2- Northeast CT

1. Understanding the Youth Perspective (increased Awareness and Education)
  - COVID impact of more use of marijuana where it causes a lack of dedication in school settings (easy way out, wasting the day). Eating edibles and overdosing in bathroom
  - Students don't have people who look like them, in their environment, who can make an intervention.
  - More negative experiences in programs where they become unproductive and present themselves smelling like weeds and not presentable.
  - Unable to work with power tools because they are high
  - Smoking and coming in the building (careless)
  - Toxic stress, lack of nurturing from parents
  - Experiencing Trauma, PTSD, using weeds to numb the pain
  - Getting involved in gang violence and sexual acts.



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- Seeing youth in their earlier years, they age themselves when you see them later because of all the trauma and pain they deal with. (3<sup>rd</sup> grade one way, but 8<sup>th</sup> you look like you're an adult or just stressed out)
- The kids need a bridge; they need techniques to arrive appropriately to work
- Selling weed to survive to help out at home (income to fit with society)
- If you can't replace it with a stipend, what is another alternative? "Don't sell weed" what else will we have them do? (limited jobs)
- Meet them where they are; if we understand the "why" we can help them make a change. Get to the antecedent of what is really going on.
- Some kids haven't attached the "why" to why they are smoking weed or using cannabis. They just doing it to follow their friends.
- Mental health, environment, trauma, violence and drugs
- The adults/parents have the same issues and it passes down to their children (generational cycle)

#### 2. Inform policy recommendations

- More mental health and having clinicians who are people of color
- Mentoring groups and revamping DARE to fit the population we are dealing with now.
- Programs where kids get help but don't know they have help(went through something but didn't take it in)
- Stipends, Dressler mega education program brought up as a model.
- Changing the environment for young people (
- Funding for organizations that are led by people that are a part of this subcommittee. These are the people making a difference and change so let's support them. The smaller/grassroots orgs, not just the big organizations.