CANNABIS

The facts, the real numbers, and how to use them in your chapter's campaigns.

Know the Basics

What it is

Cannabis (marijuana) comes from the cannabis plant. THC is the ingredient that causes the "high." It's smoked, vaped, eaten in edibles or used as concentrates ("dabs").

Today's cannabis is stronger

THC levels have climbed sharply. Vapes, dabs and other concentrates can be many times stronger than the cannabis of the past.

A brain still under construction

The brain keeps developing into the mid-20s. Teen cannabis use can affect attention, memory and learning.

Addiction is real

Starting as a teen makes cannabis use disorder several times more likely than starting as an adult.

Mental and physical health

Frequent high-THC use is linked to anxiety, depression and psychosis, and to cannabis hyperemesis syndrome (repeated, severe vomiting).

THE REAL NUMBERS: INDIANA

96%
of Indiana 7th–12th graders did **not** use cannabis in the past month. Just 3.9% did.

7.7%
of Indiana 12th graders used cannabis in the past month, down from 20.3% in 2016.

73%
of 7th–12th graders who used cannabis in the past month **vaped** it, the most common way teens use it.

Source: 2026 Indiana Youth Survey

Indiana & the Nation

Grade	Used cannabis in the past month		Difference
	Indiana (2026)	U.S. (2025)	Indiana vs. U.S.
8th	**2.5%**	4.0%	1.5 points lower
10th	**5.1%**	9.4%	4.3 points lower
12th	**7.7%**	17.1%	9.4 points lower

Compare with care: Indiana rates are lower than national rates in every grade shown. Both surveys track delta-8 and other hemp-derived THC products separately, so these numbers don't include them. Indiana figures come from the 2026 Indiana Youth Survey; U.S. figures come from Monitoring the Future 2025. The surveys reach different students in different years, so treat comparisons as a general picture.

Laws & Safety in Indiana

- **Cannabis is illegal in Indiana** for any use, recreational or medical, at any age.
- **Legal next door isn't legal here.** Cannabis sold to adults 21+ in Michigan, Illinois or Ohio is illegal once it crosses into Indiana.
- **Driving after using cannabis** is illegal in Indiana. THC slows reaction time and weakens judgment and coordination.
- **"Sold in a store" doesn't mean safe.** Delta-8 gummies and THC drinks aren't regulated like food or medicine, and labels can be wrong.

Too Much THC

Panic or severe anxiety, paranoia, racing heart, vomiting, confusion or hallucinations. Edibles can take up to 2 hours to kick in, so people often take more and get sick.

Call 911 for chest pain, trouble breathing, a seizure or someone who can't stay awake. Poison Control: 1-800-222-1222.

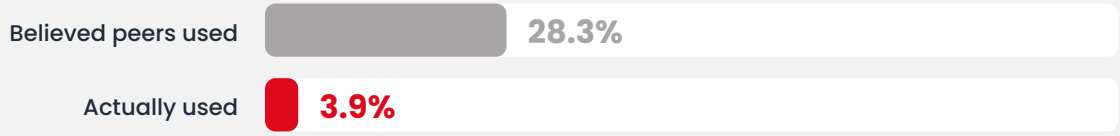
Need support? SAMHSA National Helpline: 1-800-662-4357. Free, confidential and open 24/7.

Using Data in a Norms Campaign

Social norms work when the numbers are accurate, local and believable.

When students believe "everyone smokes weed," they're more likely to use cannabis themselves. Social norms campaigns close that gap by showing the healthy majority. That only works if the numbers are right. Students spot exaggeration fast, and one bad statistic can sink the whole campaign.

The Perception Gap: What Indiana 7th–12th Graders Think vs. What's True



Past-month cannabis use, grades 7–12 combined, 2026 Indiana Youth Survey. Students overestimated peer use for every substance measured: alcohol, cannabis, cigarettes and prescription drugs.

DO

- **Lead with the healthy majority:** "96% of Indiana students in grades 7–12 didn't use cannabis in the past month."
- **Use the most local, recent data you can find.** School data beats county data, and county data beats state data.
- **Match the data to your audience.** Use high school numbers for a high school campaign.
- **Name the source and year** on every message, like "2026 Indiana Youth Survey."
- **Test messages with peers.** If it doesn't feel believable, revise it.

DON'T

- **Spotlight the problem** ("1 in 13 seniors uses weed!"). It can make cannabis use seem more normal.
- **Mix numbers** from different surveys, grades or years into one statistic.
- **Round in ways that change the meaning.** 7.7% is "about 1 in 13," not "only 1 in 20."
- **Use national numbers when local data exist,** and always say "nationally" when you do.
- **Rely on scare tactics or shame.** They tend to backfire with teens.

Message Makeover

WEAK

"Everyone's vaping weed in the bathrooms!"

STRONGER

"Most of us choose not to use cannabis. More than 9 in 10 [School] students didn't use it in the past month."

[Insert your local number and source.]

Find Your Local Data

1. **Ask your school counselor or principal** whether your school took part in the Indiana Youth Survey. Participating schools get their own report.
2. **Contact your county's Local Coordinating Council (LCC)** or local prevention coalition. Many have county-level data.
3. **Visit inys.indiana.edu** for statewide and regional results.
4. **No local data?** Use state data and label it clearly as Indiana statewide.

Sources: Indiana Youth Survey 2026, Prevention Insights, IU School of Public Health-Bloomington; Monitoring the Future 2025, University of Michigan/NIDA; National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA); Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).