

**MINUTES: 5/4/2021 Opiates and Other Drugs Task Force**  
**Dr. Libby Stuyt & Wyoming State Rep. Albert Sommers:**  
**How to be Proactive Towards Protecting Youth in the event of Wyoming legalization**  
**12 - 1PM**  
**Online Over Zoom and In Person at Public Health**

**Present:**

**Dr. Libby Stuyt, MD, Addictions Psychiatrist from Salida, Colorado**  
**Rep. Albert Sommers, Sublette County**  
**Sarah Murdock, Co-Chair Opiates & Other Drugs Task Force**  
**Sheriff KC Lehr, Sublette County Sheriff's Office (SCSO)**  
**Lt. Dave Siefkes, SCSO**  
**Cassie Crumpton, Sublette County Treatment Court**  
**Tessa Miller, SAFV Task Force**  
**Stan Cannon, Deputy County Attorney, SCA's office**  
**Carolyn Normington, Pinedale Middle School counselor**  
**Robin Carnes, SC Public Health, nurse**  
**Deanne Swain, SPC media consulting and design**  
**Trisha Scott, Coalition coordinator**

**Discussion:**

Question to Dr. Stuyt: Since high levels of THC potency are identified as causing significant harm and costs in Colorado, are there any states in the US that cap THC potency?

Answer: Vermont is the only state in the US with THC potency limits – they have a 30% limit in the flower and 60% limit in the concentrates. Libby noted that when THC was legalized in Colorado it had 2% potency and now there is up to 95% potency in concentrate forms like shatter, dab, glass. Higher potency is a faster track to addiction and physical and behavioral health problems.

LS recommends that the onus is on the industry to show that anything more than 10% THC has medicinal benefit, the current research shows the opposite (for research citations please go to

<https://www.sublettepreventioncoalition.org/post/high-concentrate-thc-and-the-adolescent-brain> to see Dr. Stuyt's powerpoint, slide 4).

Current research on THC shows that more than 8% THC in a product actually decreases medicinal benefit. Research shows medicinal benefits occur between 4 and 8 % THC.

Question: Has CBD been studied enough to make recommendations on therapeutic dose levels? Answer: There is no research and no medical recommendations on CBD dosage.

CBD is marketed as medicinal, and is not supposed to get you high.

CBD converts to THC when inhaled.

Recommend that message should go out that smoking or vaping CBD is unsafe.

National Institutes of Drug Abuse (NIDA) recently came out with a study that showed that all research on THC should be done with a maximum of 5mgs THC.

Cassie Crumpton mentioned that people have been using Delta 9/cbd as a workaround to THC. As Delta9 isn't restricted in the State of Wyoming, this will show up hot on drug tests. Both are psychoactive, although Delta8 doesn't get people as 'high' as Delta9 does. Delta8 is sold over the counter in Rock Springs.

LS - Delta8 is THC but comes from Hemp, rather than the cannabis plant. Delta8 is "quasi legal," and as such is not controlled/regulated.

Dave Siefkes asked if there is an interest from the general public in Colorado for THC potency caps? LS says there is some slow but growing interest in this, she has been working with health advocacy groups on educating legislators. She said that there is a bill going through committee in the Colorado legislature right now that would cap THC potencies - it should be available for review as soon as this Thursday, May 13. The cannabis industry is fighting this bill hard.

Stan Cannon - CO has a 5 nano-gram limit for DUI

LS - THC can't be measured in the same manner as alcohol. THC is fat soluble and leaves the body much more slowly than alcohol. Recommends better tests than a blood level test. Most states are realizing levels don't mean anything and are trying to come up with better testing methods. Research and study needs to catch up to realities.

AS - The bill to legalize recreational marijuana in the 2021 Wyoming State Legislature session did not make it to the floor for a vote, and more significantly, did not get recommended as an interim topic between now and the 2022 session. Albert currently believes that marijuana legalization does not "have legs" with current members of the legislature. Albert suggested that when this generation of legislators phases out the next generation will move on marijuana legalization.

There is interest in higher dose CBD from citizens and Albert believes that has a better chance of passing some sort of bill. Currently, only hemp CBD is allowed in Wyoming. Albert thinks it is likely we will see a bigger push for Wyoming to see decriminalization before the legalization process begins.

Question from Sarah Murdock: What is motivating the legislators who favor legalization?

AS Answers:

- Several legislative members have had family affected by the current laws, one senator's son committed suicide after being convicted of a felony.
- Some legislators believe that a bill is going to be more likely to promote the regulatory process than a referendum approach to legalization.
- Some legislators are libertarian and believe and support decriminalization because it is less government.
- The argument/perception among some legislators is that there is a lot of money to be made from legalization.

SC - how much does criminalization “pay” Wyoming and how much does the state make off of these cases?

AS - doesn't think it's been studied

Trisha - What is the cost of legalization to CO and the cost to the health care system?

LS - Profits are large for commercial marijuana companies, there are large costs to the health care system, but there are not numbers quantifying because not all effects of cannabis have identifiable ICD-codes. Which makes it hard to quantify the costs. Cannabis hyperemesis, which results in acute vomiting and dehydration is increasingly showing up in Colorado emergency rooms. Robin mentioned that she had treated patients (in Teton County) with acute hyperemesis from high concentrate THC and ‘it was awful and “I would rather treat patients with alcohol withdrawal, you can help them more with the pain.”

LS - Recommended that if Wyoming is only going to do one legalization route, do it recreationally from the start. She said that the industry likes it when states go to medical marijuana first because it normalizes the concept that THC is medicinal. It normalizes bud tenders and workers in pot shops giving medical recommendations when they have no medical background. It normalizes high potencies when in fact, high potencies have no medical benefit. Legalizing recreational THC first may allow more regulation of potencies. High concentrate THC has no medical benefit and high concentrate THC is a straighter path towards the harms of psychosis, addiction and other physical (hyperemesis) and mental health hazards. If Wyoming legalized recreational pot people could still get medical CBD at safe levels. Parents in CO are giving both CBD with small amounts of THC to children with seizures. Most of Dr. Stuyt's clients don't view their consumption as recreational as they bought it as medical. Education needs to happen so people understand the differences. Important to educate people about the harms of THC.

AS concurs that education is key, reiterates that there is a chance that legalization could happen in WY.

LS - There is not a lot of education in CO about THC, the CO governor is pro-THC, most legislators are surprised to see Dr. Stuyt's studies and research. She recommends that there should be constant PSAs, etc. to get educational information to the public. She made the comparison between the tobacco industry and how slow the research was on harms of tobacco. Commercial marijuana is on a similar trajectory.

LS - argues that THC is highly addictive in higher doses. Contends that THC is the “worst” drug out today.

SC - what is the comparison between real hashish vs today's THC?

LS - would be great if there were heritage strains developed and sold. Believes that “old” strains are beneficial compared to today's high strains. She says low-dose THC products aren't even available in stores in CO.

Albert - 2022 will be a budget session, AS doesn't believe there will be 2/3 interest in cannabis in 2022, and a 2/3 majority is needed to hear a bill in a budget session. However, the ballot issue may be ramping up. (Lobby/Advocacy groups have money behind them). There was a lot of support in the legislature for the hemp bill when it came up and passed.

Trisha asked for recommendations from AS & LS for steps/actions to help protect Wyoming youth.

LS - EDUCATION campaign that speaks to dangers of high THC; keep ages 18 - 21 from being able to get a medical card without parental knowledge; limit "looping" (going from dispensary to dispensary); kids get addicted via vaping quickly;

Attorney - shouldn't it be 25? As brains aren't fully developed until then.

LS - agrees, however, other products are at 21, hence the advice to limit to 21+

Robin - Asked about dispensaries giving out high-dose THC to pregnant mothers.

LS - great question - Budtenders should not give medical advice, and should include risks when talking with clients. LS recommends that this be a part of the legislation. And/or have a medical doctor on staff at the store for advice to customers AND limit quantities being bought.

LS - Medical community won't treat cannabis disorder, but it's not recognized as a disorder by the insurance industry, so there is no funding for care/recovery. LS recommends that mandatory laws be put in place to support recovery. Recovery from THC addiction is a long, difficult path even more so than alcohol. Anyone who consumes THC can become addicted to high potency THC.

SC - How do we reach teens/youth?

LS - Start young (elementary school 8 to 9 ages) and repeat often. National data shows that fewer and fewer kids are getting into drugs because they have seen it with older siblings and parents and they have the education from a young age. Check out these advocacy groups: Johnny's Ambassadors and FB group Recovery from Cannabis Hyperemesis.

Robin - does CO have laws about parents supplying kids with cannabis?

LS - no legislation against it. This is why we need more education.

### ***After meeting conversation ...***

Ballot initiatives don't give the State the opportunity to write a bill that you want. Some legislatures believe that it's better to jump ahead of a ballot initiative with a bill vs a ballot initiative (but that also has dangers). The last poll Albert heard said that about 55% of Wyomingites support THC legalization. Also, there is a lot of voter base support for higher-dose CBD. It really becomes a personal issue/reasoning.

AS - If/when the federal government legalizes it, it will change our landscape more quickly. And/or the younger generation after Albert, when they become legislators, it will change as that age group doesn't have the issues or concerns with THC than older generations do.

Carolyn - does using/arrests/probation run in families?

Stan - yes, most definitely, in his experience everyone in a family can be on probation.

Albert - ARP funding coming down from Feds for substance addiction. Urges Sublette schools and groups to apply for this funding to help get more counselors into Sublette county.

Discussion on lack of funding/housing issues for getting counselors here.

Discussion on how to educate: teach kids refusal skills; provide counseling; provide mentorships in the community to keep kids connected; provide motivational reasons to not use; use science-based facts, watch for the pitfalls of lecturing and kids tuning out; fear-based doesn't work long term; be conversational.