

Executive Summary



Introduction

Overview

The California Department of Public Health (CDPH) collaborated with Rescue Agency (Rescue) to execute a comprehensive communications campaign targeting teenagers aged 13–17 at risk of underage cannabis use. The campaign, delivered through the *Mind Over Marijuana* brand, utilized flagship videos "File Not Found" and "Comes Back" to emphasize the negative impacts of underage cannabis use on memory, friendships, and stress coping. Additionally, the campaign indirectly reached youth through the *Let's Talk Cannabis/Hablemos de la Marihuana* brand, aiming to encourage parents and guardians to engage in conversations about cannabis use with their teens. The campaign ran statewide from January to June 2023, employing various channels like television, out-of-home, social media, and digital advertising. This report presents findings from the follow-up evaluation, which involved surveys targeting both teens (aged 13–18) and parents/guardians (of teens aged 11–18) to assess campaign impact on knowledge, attitudes, behaviors, and awareness.



Key Findings for Teen Audience

The follow-up evaluation of the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) and Rescue's youth cannabis awareness campaign reveals a series of significant positive impacts.

Youth Campaign Awareness and Engagement

- The campaign achieved a **high level of awareness among teenagers**, with **84%** of teens being aware of its various components. The main videos, "File Not Found" and "Comes Back," had awareness rates of 26% and 22%, respectively. Of those aware of the campaign, 58% engaged with it.
- **The campaign effectively reached teenagers primarily through Instagram (50%) and YouTube (46%)**, with other channels like TikTok (33%), Facebook (30%), and Snapchat (22%) also contributing to its reach.
- **Teens found the campaign to be effective** in imparting new information about the consequences of teen cannabis use. The majority agreed that the campaign highlighted the impact of cannabis on memory (82%) and the link between cannabis use and stress and anxiety (81%). Moreover, 72% reported that the campaign motivated them to reduce or limit their cannabis use.

Youth Follow-Up Knowledge, Attitudes, and Beliefs

- **The campaign made a significant impact on teens' knowledge and attitudes related to cannabis use.** Awareness of the main videos was linked to increased knowledge of campaign messages. For instance, "File Not Found" awareness was associated with knowing that using weed before brain development can alter brain function (93%), while "Comes Back" awareness was linked to knowledge that teen cannabis use can make managing stress and anxiety harder (89%).
- **The campaign positively influenced attitudes**, with agreement levels rising for five out of seven campaign attitude statements. Notably, those aware of "File Not Found" were more likely to strongly agree that cannabis can impact memory and attention.
- **The campaign also resulted in increased perceptions of risk associated with cannabis use**, particularly among occasional and regular users for fun and stress management.

Youth Follow-Up Intentions, Micro-Behaviors, and Behaviors

- **In terms of intentions, teens exposed to the campaign were less likely to intend to use cannabis during special or important moments and to manage stress or anxiety with cannabis.** They were also more likely to take steps to reduce or prevent cannabis use.
- **The campaign was particularly effective among Hispanic teens, Spanish-language speakers, and those with higher levels of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).** However, it had limited impact on LGBTQ+ teens, those facing financial difficulties, and nonbinary

and transgender youth. The campaign performed consistently across regions and among male- and female-identifying youth.

- **Consistent cannabis users (CSTs) showed increased perceptions of risk associated with cannabis use**, but they remained skeptical about cannabis as an ineffective coping mechanism. CSTs, however, were more likely to seek alternative stress management activities and engage in discussions with parents/guardians about cannabis use and risks.

In summary, the youth cannabis awareness campaign achieved significant awareness, positively influenced knowledge and attitudes, increased risk perception, and led to intentions to reduce or avoid cannabis use. While it had varying impacts among subgroups, the campaign overall played a crucial role in educating and motivating teenagers to make informed decisions regarding cannabis use.

Key Findings for Parent/Guardian Audience

The follow-up evaluation of the CDPH and Rescue's parent and guardian campaign reveals a series of significant positive impacts.

Parent/Guardian Campaign Awareness and Engagement

- **A significant portion of parents and guardians (58%) exhibited aided awareness of the campaign**, encountering at least one of its components within the past six months. Notably, 25% had seen the flagship video, and 28% remembered a social media post with the message, "You're their biggest influence: A conversation about weed can prevent future misuse." Among those exposed to the flagship video, 22% visited the campaign website, and 21% engaged with campaign content on social media by liking, reacting, voting, or commenting.
- **The campaign successfully reached most adults through Facebook (40%) and television (38%)**, with additional exposure on platforms like YouTube (27%), streaming video channels (20%), and radio (14%).
- **Parents and guardians largely found the campaign effective**, with 87% agreeing that it encouraged them to discuss cannabis with their children. Additionally, 86% felt that it demonstrated the importance of conversations in preventing or reducing cannabis use, and 76% believed it provided new insights into the significance of discussing marijuana with their children.
- **The campaign significantly affected parents and guardians' perceptions regarding the risks associated with occasional cannabis use among youth.** Increased campaign awareness and engagement were linked to higher odds of perceiving occasional use by youth aged 11–14 and 15–17 as risky. Likewise, the belief in the importance of ongoing conversations about cannabis risks and their effectiveness in reducing future misuse, as well as the perception of parents' significant role in influencing their child's cannabis use, were positively impacted by campaign awareness and engagement.

Parent/Guardian Follow-Up Knowledge, Attitudes, and Beliefs

- **As campaign awareness and engagement increased, so did the belief that conversations were extremely important.** Furthermore, campaign awareness and engagement were associated with greater odds of agreeing that ongoing conversations about the risks of cannabis can reduce future misuse and that parents play a significant role in influencing their child's cannabis use.
- **Moreover, parents and guardians who were exposed to the campaign were more knowledgeable about tips for discussing cannabis risks** with their children and the role of ongoing conversations in reducing misuse. These findings underscore the campaign's success in improving knowledge and attitudes among parents and guardians.

Parent/Guardian Follow-Up Intentions, Micro-Behaviors, and Behaviors

- **The campaign also effectively motivated parents and guardians to seek more information and take actions to prepare for future conversations** about cannabis with their children. Increased campaign awareness and engagement were associated with a higher likelihood of searching for cannabis risk information online, looking for advice on the topic, seeking guidance from online forums, and consulting professionals such as pediatricians, therapists, or counselors. Additionally, parents who engaged with the campaign were more likely to prepare for conversations and intended to have such discussions more frequently in the coming year.
- **The campaign led to more discussions about cannabis use — 49% of parents/guardians reported discussing it more often;** however, there was no significant relationship between campaign awareness and engagement and the frequency of recent conversations about cannabis. This indicates that, at the time we conducted our evaluation, the campaign's impact on conversation frequency did not reach statistical significance.
- **Parents and guardians still require additional support in feeling adequately prepared for these conversations,** as campaign awareness was associated with lower odds of feeling prepared, potentially due to the introduction of new information highlighting knowledge gaps.

Parent/Guardian Follow-Up Subgroup Differences

- **The campaign's effectiveness was particularly pronounced among Spanish-speaking parents and guardians,** who exhibited higher engagement levels and increased discussions about cannabis with their children. Spanish-speaking parents also experienced greater shifts in beliefs related to the importance and effectiveness of these conversations.

Overall, the campaign performed well across various demographic groups, with particular success among parents and guardians with children aged 11–14, residents of Southern California, and non-white participants. These findings collectively highlight the campaign's positive impact in promoting informed and productive conversations between parents and guardians and their children about the risks of cannabis use.