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Local groups oppose medical marijuana issue

In advance of a possible November statewide ballot initiative in Ohio authorizing the use of marijuana as a medicine for certain types of illnesses, the Anti-Drug Coalition of Carroll County and the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board of Tuscarawas and Carroll Counties have already gone on record in opposition to the issue.

At their recent meetings, both organizations unanimously endorsed the position of the Drug Free Action Alliance opposing marijuana as a medicine in the absence of clinical trials. According to the alliance policy statement, marijuana should be subject to the same research, consideration and study as any other potential medicine, under the standards of the U.S. Food and Drug Administration.

Legalizing marijuana for medical use should not be decided by legislative or voter initiative.

Brian Kress, chair of the ADAMHS board, agrees, "Science has shown us that marijuana often leads to usage of more addictive drugs, legal and illicit. We are already witnessing the misuse of medical marijuana in other states where it has been legalized. This should not be Ohio's answer to pain management."

Mike Durkin, clerk of courts and chief probation officer for Carroll County Municipal Court and chairman of the Anti-Drug

Coalition of Carroll County, stresses the fact that there already are FDA-approved synthetic forms of THC available to be prescribed for these same illnesses. He added, "The coalition really wanted to get out in front of this issue, because, ultimately, allowing marijuana to be dispersed in this manner could negatively affect every household in Ohio."

Some of the organizations involved with the Anti-Drug Coalition of Carroll County include Carroll County Municipal Court, Carroll County Board of Commissioners, prosecutor's office, sheriff's department, district board of health, Carroll County Alcohol and Addiction Program, juvenile court, ADAMHS board, Carrollton Police Department and several concerned citizens.

Orvis Campell, chief detective at the Tuscarawas County Sheriff's Office and a member of the ADAMHS board, says, "The truth is that the smoking of marijuana for medicinal use is a fallacy. The FDA has concluded that there is sound evidence that smoked marijuana is harmful.

"In my law enforcement career, many addicts of different types of illegal drugs have expressed great remorse over their use of marijuana, stating that it was the use of marijuana that led them to the use of even more harmful, illegal drugs and left them resorting to theft and other crimes

to support their addictions. The real evidence appears clear to me and it is that smoked marijuana has not withstood the rigors of science - it is not medicine, and it is not safe."

Dave Schaffer, ADAMHS board director states that, "from an addiction and public health perspective, we know that that availability of any drug leads to its increased use and all of the negative consequences associated with drug abuse for the individual, their family and community."

According to Schaffer, "even if the FDA were to eventually authorize marijuana as a prescribed drug, regulating and controlling its distribution would be next to impossible. We know this based on the fact that very powerful prescription pain killers often illegally end up in the hands of individuals with addictive disorders, including young people."

According to the ADAMHS board, marijuana ranks second only to alcohol as the drug of choice for adults entering board-funded treatment programs. For individuals under the age of 18 entering addiction treatment, marijuana is tied with alcohol as the primary drug of choice.

To view the full text of the action alliance's policy statement, see its website at www.DrugFreeActionAlliance.org or the anti-drug coalition's website at www.adc-carroll.com.