

Over 100 Child Abuse Deaths Found Related to Cannabis, with Rise of Commercial Industry

Child Neglect and Violence by Marijuana Impaired Parents are the Leading Causes

WASHINGTON, DC, US, April 23, 2018 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Parents Opposed to Pot (POP), a nonprofit dedicated to exposing the dangers of marijuana, counts 106 child abuse deaths related to marijuana since states voted to legalize it in November 2012. POP cautions that the normalization of marijuana should be a primary concern to parents and child protection agencies. April is Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month, and April 25 is Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Day.

Parents Opposed to Pot found local newspaper reports of the incidents online, and the number of deaths could actually be much higher. Some states are more likely than other states to report when marijuana drug use is involved.

The deaths have occurred in 30 states, and the counts are higher in states that have legalized pot. The problem is serious enough that when the National Alliance for Drug-Endangered Children ran a conference last summer, much of it focused on marijuana. Nationally, approximately 1700 child abuse deaths occur each year, and substance abuse is a major risk factor.

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The earliest deaths after 2012 that POP recorded seemed to be from neglect: toddlers who drowned, died in fires, or infants who were left in hot cars when parents smoked pot and forgot about them. However, many deaths related to marijuana were caused by domestic violence, because parents became angry or psychotic from pot use and had paranoid delusions. The potency of marijuana is several times stronger than it was in the 1990s. The public has not been educated well about how marijuana can trigger psychosis and/or schizophrenia, as stated in the [2017 National Academy of Sciences report](#).



PopPot Official Logo

Shortly after Colorado commercialized marijuana in 2014, stories of three tragic deaths of toddlers

related to their parents' use of marijuana emerged. The month Washington legalized possession of marijuana, a two-year-old drank from his mother's bong and died. After investigating, state officials determined that the toddler had ingested lethal amounts of both THC and meth, enough to kill an adult.

“As articles in popular magazines such as Cosmopolitan and Oprah Winfrey's 'O' portray cannabis as the 'it' drug, parents are being led to believe that a serving of marijuana is no more dangerous than a glass of beer or wine,” explains Dr. Ken Finn, a medical advisor to PopPot.org. “However, three sets of twins died in fires when parents abandoned these toddlers for reasons related to their marijuana use.”

The promotion of marijuana as a way to relax is inappropriate for parents or caregivers of small children, and the promotion of marijuana for pregnant women with morning sickness is a dangerous trend.

Marijuana use impairs executive functioning -- which led to poor judgement and forgetfulness in many of these deaths. Greater acceptance means more use, and more use means more addiction.

Eleven deaths occurred in Colorado, while 10 took place in California. In both states, at least one child died where butane hash oil (BHO) labs operated, and numerous children were injured in BHO fires. The two most recent deaths in Colorado occurred last summer when a mother followed a cult leader to a marijuana farm. No one knows how long the two girls had been dead when they were discovered locked in a car covered in tarp last September. They were starved to death. An unusual death in California occurred when a babysitter went to her cousin's car to smoke pot, leaving a 16-month-old boy inside. The toddler eventually came outside and the visiting car ran over him.

Many ER treatments followed the accidental ingestion of marijuana candies and cookies. A medical journal reported last year that an 11-month-old baby suffered from an enlarged heart muscle and couldn't be revived a few days after ingesting marijuana in Colorado. However, it's usually not edibles that kill children, but other acts of neglect and violent behavior.

In Florida, three children drowned when parents or babysitters smoked pot and forgot about them. At least 10 deaths occurred when parents left small children in hot cars while they smoked cannabis. The most common forms of death by neglect when parents use cannabis are fires, 15, drownings, 10 and hot cars, 10.

During the intense debate over medical marijuana in Pennsylvania, the number of pot-related child abuse deaths seemed to increase. Much drama was used to discuss children with seizures, while five other children died due to adult pot use between April and December, 2016.

POP is not the only organization to notice the uptick in child deaths related to marijuana. Yvapi County District Attorney Sheila Polk reported that, in 2013, 62 deaths of children in Arizona were associated with cannabis, and that it was the substance most often related to accidental deaths in the state.

Nationally, parents cause about three quarters of child abuse deaths and most child abuse deaths occur because of neglect. When there's marijuana in the picture, violence or violent neglect are just as likely to cause death. Boyfriends of the mothers caused 14 such deaths, most often from violence, with the moms in these instances often using pot too. One recent death was the beating death of a three-year-old. The stepfather, who was charged, kept marijuana in the house. Research shows that cannabis can trigger negative thoughts and violent behavior. But, we haven't included this case on our list because it's not clear what role the drug played in this death.

In four cases, children died because babysitters' neglected the child, while in four different instances a relative was responsible for the deaths.

POP published [18 blog articles on Child Endangerment](#) that explain some of facts surrounding the deaths. A [downloadable fact sheet](#) available on the PopPot.org webpage simplifies the statistics.

Parents Opposed to Pot is a 501c3 nonprofit based in Merrifield, Virginia.

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