MEDIA RELEASE

Protecting Teens from Summer Substance Use
It takes a village.

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Most teens look forward to the summer season with great anticipation. The summer months represent freedom from school responsibilities and more time with friends to explore their interests and spend long days in the sun. Unfortunately, summer also represents a season of high-risk behavior including teen substance use. Studies show that teens are far more likely to begin trying drugs and alcohol for the first time during the summer months when they have more unsupervised time.

Preventing youth from experimenting with alcohol, marijuana and tobacco is not a solo task but requires the entire community of retailers, festival and concert organizers, parents, neighbors, coaches, and community leaders.

To help protect our youth from the risks of alcohol, tobacco or marijuana, here are five things our community can do:

1. Retailers provide specific policies backed up by frequent training and accountability that enable staff to say, “If I sell to you, I’ll lose my job.”

2. Retailers and festival or concert organizers provide the right tools for staff:
   - Program cash registers to recognize age-restricted product sales and prompt cashiers to require ID.
   - Electronic ID scanner or a “blacklight” wand to identify fake IDs.
   - Time to check the ID properly without the pressure of check out time.
   - Prominently display signs giving notice to customers that your business or event checks IDs. This gives staff confidence to check IDs thoroughly and customers the patience to wait.
   - Alcohol, tobacco, and cannabis products placed entirely away and separate from areas that contain products likely to be purchased by youth (candy, snack foods or energy drinks).

3. Festival, concert organizers, bars, and restaurants include offering non-alcoholic alternatives. The movement to drink less alcohol is booming, changing the culture that someone can only enjoy the occasion with an alcoholic beverage in hand. Our youth are watching and mimicking these actions.

4. Festival and concert organizers who allow the sale of novel THC, like Delta-8 THC, establish a rule that buyers must be 21 years of age to purchase these new products. Delta-8 THC has psychoactive and intoxicating effects, similar to Delta-9 THC. See FDA.gov. Move these products to a restricted area, like alcohol, where youth access is restricted.
5. Retailers acting responsibly shifts access from commercial sources to social sources.
   - Parents set rules and curfews so teens know you care about their wellbeing and you are taking note of their actions.
   - Parents knowing teens’ whereabouts and who they are with.
   - Everyone talking with the children you know about alcohol, tobacco, and marijuana; hear their challenges and problem solve together.

Summer months offer more opportunities for teens to socialize and explore their independence without adults. When the whole community comes together, the journey can be safer and easier for our teens to navigate.