

Juvenile Assessment Center  
of Lee County  
2107 Dr. Martin Luther King Blvd.  
Fort Myers, FL 33901  
(239) 258-3450  
www.swfjac.org

Summer 2016

# The JAC Perspective



*The Juvenile Assessment Center of Lee County ... assisting youth and their families to seek the treatment and programs they need to lead productive, crime free lives.*

Free drug testing kits are available at the JAC 24 hours a day for parents to use with their youth. A photo ID is required.

**Law enforcement should call ahead to**

**258-3461  
or 258-3471**

**when bringing an arrested youth to the JAC or to confirm that a youth is eligible for a civil citation.**



The JAC of Lee County is operated by the Lee County Sheriff's Office in partnership with the Lee County Board of County Commissioners and the Department of Juvenile Justice.

## Time to Talk to Teens about Marijuana

On November 8th Florida will vote on Amendment 2, a proposed constitutional amendment allowing for the medical use of marijuana for individuals with debilitating medical conditions as determined by a licensed Florida physician. In 2014, 57% of Florida voters supported a similar amendment, falling just short of the required 60% threshold for it to pass. In a poll of Florida voters (May 2016), 80% said that they would vote in favor of an amendment allowing for medical marijuana this year. The poll also found that 56% of Floridians would support allowing adults to legally possess small amounts of marijuana for recreational use. While the recreational use of marijuana is not under consideration by Florida voters this year, multiple Florida counties and cities have already approved the decriminalization of the possession of marijuana in small amounts for adults in their



respective jurisdictions. Additional Florida communities are also considering decriminalizing it. In other words, there is a growing acceptance toward the use of marijuana in Florida. We are seeing the same trend at the JAC with youth who have received a civil citation for marijuana possession. They are telling us lots of reasons why they think it is okay for them to use marijuana: "It's from nature so it can't be bad." "It's legal in some states so it must not be harmful." "It's used as medicine so it must be good." "Marijuana is not addictive." "Marijuana doesn't have any long term effects." "I smoke it before school and it hasn't affected my grades." "It's safer to use than alcohol or cigarettes." Both sides of the Amendment 2 issue have pledged to do lots of advertising this year to win support of their viewpoint. In the next few months kids are likely to be exposed to lots of (Continued page 2)

## Announcing CHAMPS

"Welcome!" to Amanda Cruz, the JAC's new Youth Program Coordinator. Ms. Cruz is coordinating the JAC's newest program: CHAMPS (Choosing Healthy Attitudes & Motivating Personal Success). Youth who participate in the JAC's Civil Citation program and who have a need for more intensive services will be referred to CHAMPS. CHAMPS will provide screening, development of individualized goals, counseling, peer support groups, random drug testing, short term case management, and referrals for additional services based upon the youth's needs.



Amanda Cruz  
Youth Program Coordinator

## Time to Talk to Teens About Marijuana (cont.)

messages about marijuana, some of which will debate the benefits of marijuana. Many teens will hear those message and perceive that marijuana is safe for them to use. Teens, who have still-developing brains, are especially susceptible to negative effects from marijuana use.

**78% of teens say that they have close friends who use marijuana.**

It is more important than ever for parents and others working with youth to know the facts regarding marijuana's effects on adolescents. It is important to discuss with youth why marijuana is risky for teens' health and development, and to know how to address teens' misperceptions

## Resource Guide Update

The JAC's "Community Resource Guide" was updated recently. It has been awhile since the last



update so there were lots of changes in this update. The resource guide is available from the JAC website's main page at [www.swfljac.org](http://www.swfljac.org). **For anyone who previously bookmarked the resource guide or created a link to it from another website please note: the old website address ([www.swfljac.org/guide.pdf](http://www.swfljac.org/guide.pdf)) will no longer work.** The JAC's current web publishing software changes the web address of pdf publications each time they are updated. It is best to find the most recent version of the JAC's Community Resource Guide from a link on the JAC website's main page.

about marijuana and arguments for its use. The Partnership for Drug-Free Kids has a *Marijuana Talk Kit: What You Need to Know to Talk with Your Teen About Marijuana*. It is available from it's website at [www.drugfree.org/MJTalkKit](http://www.drugfree.org/MJTalkKit). It covers what parents need to know about marijuana, why marijuana is risky for teens, how to talk to teens about marijuana, and how to respond to a teen's questions and

**"But you smoked weed when you were a teen."**

arguments. It addresses some of parents' toughest issues, such as, what to say if a teen argues that his parents smoked marijuana when they were younger or calls the parents out for smoking cigarettes or drinking alcohol.

Short-term effects of marijuana use include problems with memory, learning, thinking, and problem solving.

**16.9% of Florida 12<sup>th</sup> grade students reported smoking marijuana before or during school.**

**41% of teen marijuana smokers say they began before the age of 15.**

**The youngest marijuana user the JAC has seen this year was in 5<sup>th</sup> grade (age 10).**



Susanne "Susan" Sogar is the new Family Counselor with Lutheran Services of Florida at the JAC. She provides counseling for youth who haven't been arrested but are identified as being on the cusp of entering the juvenile justice system. This includes youth that display habitual runaway, truant, or ungovernable behaviors. To access her services call Lutheran Services for an intake appointment at 278-5400.



Congratulations to Melanie Ross-Martinez who has been appointed as the Juvenile Probation Officer Supervisor for the Department of Juvenile Justice at the JAC.

*Data on marijuana cited in this newsletter are from the 2015 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey and the Partnership for Drug-Free Kids' Marijuana Talk Kit.*