Top 10 Misperceptions about Marijuana
Top Ten: Misperceptions about Marijuana

1. Marijuana is harmless.
   - Associated with increased risks of mental illness, heart disease, cancer, lung disease and stroke
   - Contains 3-5 times the amount of carcinogens as tobacco
   - Emergency Room visits from marijuana side-effects are greater than all other substances combined

2. Marijuana is medicine.
   - Rejected for medicinal use by prominent national health organizations
   - Combustible leaf marijuana has no medical contribution
   - In medical marijuana states, less than 3% of users have cancer, AIDS, glaucoma, etc.

3. The marijuana “high” only lasts for a few hours.
   - A minimum of 24-hour acute impairment is standard after marijuana use
   - Sub-acute impairment can last a week or longer
   - Significant THC increases have users reporting ill-effects for days

4. Presence-in-system testing is unreliable because it does not measure impairment.
   - Drug testing should serve as one component of a comprehensive safe and drug-free workplace program
   - Testing validates the signs and symptoms of documented impaired behavior; maintaining even small amounts of THC in one’s system can cause substantial impairment
   - Presence-in-system testing remains the gold standard and is upheld by the courts as valid

5. Marijuana is not addictive.
   - Physiological dependence and withdrawal require substance abuse treatment
   - 1 in 10 adult marijuana users will become dependent to the point of requiring treatment
   - 1 in 6 adolescent marijuana users develop dependence

6. Marijuana can/should be regulated like alcohol.
   - Comparisons between alcohol and marijuana regulation needs are not similar
   - Comparable standardized measurements do not exist for marijuana
   - The social costs related to alcohol abuse likewise exist with marijuana

7. Marijuana is not a gateway drug.
   - 2-5 times greater risk of using other drugs when marijuana is the onset drug
   - Frequency of marijuana use is significant with other illicit drugs of abuse and dependence
   - Majority of individuals seeking drug treatment list marijuana as their gateway drug

8. Marijuana is safer than cigarettes or alcohol.
   - Permanent damage to brain function and long-term mental health detriments are not safe
   - Addiction, psychosis and cognitive function loss are never “safer”
   - Effects of extremely high THC products found in edibles, waxes and oils are unknown

9. There are no long-term effects from marijuana use.
   - Cognitive decline among marijuana users does not change with adult abstinence
   - 17% increased risk for depression
   - 40% increased risk of psychotic symptoms/disorders

10. It is safer to drive with marijuana in your system.
    - 2-5 times increase to risk of crashes involving marijuana-impaired driving
    - Driving slower does not mean driving safer
    - Risks include: impaired cognitive function and slowed response times