



Henny Lasley
Co-founder and
Executive Director of
One Chance to Grow Up

December 10, 2024

GUEST COLUMN: Psychedelics pose grave new threat to Colorado kids

Take a moment to consider what the world looks like from the perspective of a Colorado teen today.

Not only have they grown up in an era of mass commercialization of marijuana, but they've seen it presented as medicine, complete with green crosses and doctors eager to provide medical marijuana cards to those 18 or older (think high school senior) for a small fee.

If marijuana is supported by physicians and marketed as medicine, it must be healthy, right? Yet, unlike a typical pill, this marijuana comes in sweet and fruity flavors that are appealing to young palates. It's no wonder that a recent study showed a 1,375% increase over a five-year period of kids under 6 ingesting THC edibles.

Layered on top of this, Colorado teens on Jan. 1 will be exposed to risks from a new era of legal and commercialized psychedelics. Colorado has already decriminalized psychedelics; an adult can grow psilocybin in their home and "gift" it to others 21 years old and older.

This is a result of a ballot issue, Proposition 122, approved by Colorado voters in 2022 after proponents spent nearly \$6 million on their one-sided campaign.

These commercialized products are overseen by Colorado's new "Natural Medicine Division," which is housed in the Department of Revenue. Imagine for a moment the marketing messages packed into that division's name:

It's "natural" a word that, to impressionable teens, may be synonymous with "healthy".

It's "medicine" — the official state agency says so. That word also implies good health.

So, even before the psychedelic industry makes its unsubstantiated and overblown claims of the therapeutic value of psychedelic mushrooms, teens have received the message that this supports good health.

Oh, and the psychedelics are offered at "healing centers," so that must be safe and healthy, right? Yet customers don't have to have any specific diagnosis or condition to participate at a healing center. Wink, wink.

Again, Colorado allows this "medicine" to come in candy forms that are appealing to kids who may intentionally or unintentionally ingest it. Imagine the risks and terror that could result. If it's medicine, couldn't it come in a dry, colorless capsule?

Already, a Colorado teenager has died, falling to his death after ingesting psychedelic mushrooms. We might not ever know exactly what happened. He was 15 years old.

A 2023 state-conducted youth survey reported that 3.8% of Colorado high school students had tried psychedelics.

We are naive if we think that kids won't see these products as safer now that they are state sanctioned. After all, data reflected a decreased perception of harm of marijuana among teens after retail marijuana commercialization started in 2014.

Rocky Mountain Poison & Drug Safety control centers are receiving troubling reports. As reported at their 18th annual scientific meeting, in a sample of 2,306 U.S. adults who used a psychedelic drug in the past year, 26% reported going to the ER or urgent care due to use of a psychedelic. Deeply concerning, 13.3%, reported that someone forced sexual advances or acts on them while under the influence of psychedelics.

And this is before "facilitators" can apply through the Colorado Department of Regulatory Agencies' licensing program starting on Jan. 1. These products, including delicious edibles, can be removed from a so-called healthy center by a facilitator for use at retreats or "experiences" outside of the center. Is it only a matter of time before a curious child gets ahold of one?

Currently, the state does not have an educational campaign to alert parents and teens of the risks. Colorado's Board of Health expressed deep concern that Colorado's Department of Health and Environment has no authority or involvement in the rollout of this program, other than licensing the testing centers for manufactured products.

A flyer is buried on a link in the Natural Medicine Division website. The downloadable document offers guidance for businesses and those who want to use psychedelics. It includes nothing on how to limit risks to kids or talk to them about this.

As if today's parents didn't have enough to deal with, the legal era of psychedelics introduces this new threat.

Marijuana commercialization started under the same medicine framework. The expansion and continued normalization of THC has rapidly expanded to include delivery, clubs, unlimited product types and highly potent commercialized products including vapes, concentrates, bath oils, lotions and even suppositories. This should cause us all to pause. Is this the same song, second verse?

Those who are concerned about this can help reduce the risk to all kids. Research shows that if teens have a parent or other trusted adult in their life to ask questions, they are less likely to use substances.

Talk with teens in your life and explain the risks. Natural does not equal healthy or safe for their growing brains, whether we're talking about marijuana or psychedelics.

Urge your local city council or county commissioners to sharply restrict where psychedelic businesses can locate through their zoning rules. Research shows that youth who live around marijuana businesses have more positive views of the drug. Psychedelic businesses could have the same effect on nearby teens.

Encourage your school district to share science-based educational information and evidence-based prevention strategies with students and their families about the risks and how to reduce them.

Today's teens have only one chance to grow up. Colorado adults should do everything in our power to make it a safe and healthy journey for them.

Henny Lasley is one of the co-founders of One Chance To Grow Up and serves as the executive director. One Chance To Grow Up is in its 12th year of protecting kids from today's marijuana through transparency, education, empowerment and policy.

[The Gazette/opinion/guest-column-psychedelics-pose-grave-New](#)

By Henny Lasley PUBLISHED: Dec 10, 2024 Updated Dec 10, 2024

onechancetogrowup.org

info@onechancetogrowup.org

 [OneChanceToGrowUp](https://www.facebook.com/OneChanceToGrowUp)

 [1chance2growup](https://twitter.com/1chance2growup)

One Chance to Grow Up protects kids from THC through transparency, education, empowerment, and policy. We don't take sides on the politics of legalization but instead serve as a reliable resource for parents, media, policymakers, and all who care about kids. Started by concerned parents, we're a 501(c)(3) nonprofit supported by charitable contributions.

