

SYNTHETIC MARIJUANA – EDUCATION AND AWARENESS

Adopted by Convention Delegates May 2015

- WHEREAS, There are reported cases of psychotic effects, such as extreme anxiety, paranoia, hallucinations, thoughts of suicide and harmful thoughts due to use of synthetic marijuana commonly known as “Spice” or “K2”; and
- WHEREAS, Synthetic marijuana products are easily obtained and are gaining popularity at an alarming rate among high school students; due to sophisticated marketing, the products that contain these synthetic cannabinoids are perceived as “legal” alternatives to marijuana despite the fact that they are typically advertised as herbal incense or plant food; and
- WHEREAS, As of November 30, 2014 there were 3,359 cases reported to poison control centers of synthetic marijuana abuse with side effects including an increase in blood pressure and heart rate, loss of blood flow to the heart, parasitic ingestion, seizures, agitation, vomiting and confusion; and
- WHEREAS, The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has designated the five most active ingredients in synthetic marijuana as illegal to sell, purchase or possess; makers and suppliers continually alter the composition of chemical compounds that are used to create synthetic marijuana to evade prosecution and continue to sell these products; the synthetic additives are difficult to detect and identify; now therefore be it
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA, and its units, councils and districts encourage parents, guardians and all others responsible for the welfare of children and youth to promote awareness, engage in conversations and educate themselves and their families about the dangers of synthetic marijuana; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA, and its units, councils and districts collaborate with public health authorities, school health professionals and other drug awareness and prevention agencies in developing and promoting health warnings related to synthetic marijuana; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA, and its units, councils and districts support legislation to promote additional restrictions on the purchase, sale, possession, and distribution of synthetic marijuana; and be it further
- RESOLVED,** That the California State PTA submit this resolution to the National PTA for consideration at the National PTA Convention.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY

Synthetic marijuana is marketed as a legal alternative to cannabis (marijuana), and is known by names such as spice, K2, fake weed, Yucatan fire, moon rocks and many others. Most people smoke synthetic marijuana by rolling it in papers (as with marijuana or handmade tobacco cigarettes); sometimes, it is mixed with marijuana. Some users also make it into an herbal tea for drinking.

Although marijuana has been shown to have beneficial effects on certain health issues, synthetic marijuana has no known beneficial effects. A wide variety of mixtures produce experiences similar to marijuana. Synthetic marijuana products contain dried plant materials, chemical additives, and/or cannabis compounds and most are labeled “NOT FOR HUMAN CONSUMPTION.”

The American Association of Poison Control Centers and the National Institute on Drug Abuse state these mixtures can cause psychotic effects, such as extreme anxiety, paranoia, hallucinations, and harmful thoughts, including thoughts of suicide. Other side effects include extreme high blood pressure, loss of blood flow, tremors, seizures, agitation, vomiting and confusion. Thousands of cases of harmful side effects have been reported in 2014 alone. In 2011, synthetic marijuana was mentioned by patients in the emergency room 28,531 times. This was a drastic increase over the 11,406 reports in 2010. The use of these compounds among adolescents has been increasing with more than 7% of high school students having used synthetic marijuana in the past year.

Most chemicals used to produce synthetic marijuana are legal for persons of any age to purchase. They can be purchased online or in person in locations such as smoke shops and gas stations. The U.S. government and several states, including California, have attempted to outlaw synthetic marijuana by identifying the specific ingredients and making them illegal. However, manufacturers continue to produce synthetic marijuana by changing the chemical composition to include only legal products. When blood tests are administered on those who have used synthetic marijuana, labs cannot detect the chemical compounds with current tests. This makes prosecution very difficult.