

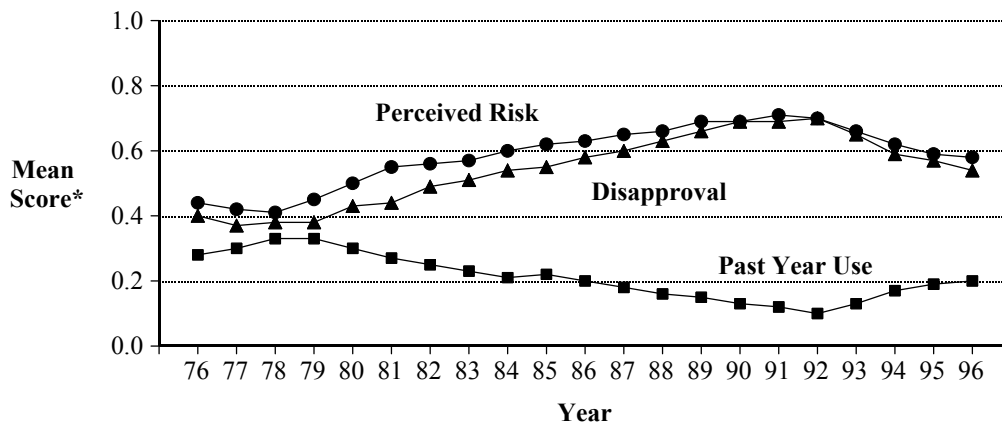
## A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

### *Most Important Determinants of Teen Marijuana Use are Disapproval and Perceived Risk*

Marijuana use among youth has fluctuated dramatically over the past three decades. The percentage of high school seniors reporting marijuana use within the past year peaked in the late 1970s, decreased throughout the 80s, then began to increase again in the 90s. A recent analysis of data from the national Monitoring the Future (MTF) study found that while lifestyle factors (such as religious and political beliefs, grades, and truancy) are important in determining which students are likely to use marijuana, they do not account for the recent shifts in marijuana use. Instead, the most significant determinants of marijuana use are attitudes about such behavior--perceived risk of harmfulness and disapproval. The authors speculate that the recent decline in these attitudes may stem from an absence of realistic information about the risks and consequences of marijuana use, and they assert that "presenting such information once does not finish the job; the messages must be repeated lest they be lost from one cohort to the next" (p. 890).

**Past Year Marijuana Use, Perceived Risk, and Disapproval,  
U.S. High School Seniors, 1976-1996**



\*In order to make the data more comparable, the perceived risk and disapproval items were rescaled so that the lowest possible score (indicating no risk, or don't disapprove) was set equal to 0 and the maximum possible score (indicating great risk, or strongly disapprove) was set equal to 1. Marijuana use during the previous 12 months was scored 0 for no use, 1 for any use.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from data from Jerald Bachman, Lloyd Johnston, and Patrick O'Malley, "Explaining Recent Increases in Students' Marijuana Use: Impacts of Perceived Risks and Disapproval, 1976 through 1996," *American Journal of Public Health* 88(6):887-892. For more information, contact Dr. Jerald Bachman at 313-763-5043.