

# Understanding risk and protective factors for youth marijuana use is essential to effective prevention



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# Youth marijuana use is widespread and can be associated with serious problems

- 46% of 12<sup>th</sup> graders have ever used
- Among youth, associated problems include:
  - School failure, dropout, truancy
  - Poorer memory, attention, IQ
  - Other risk behavior
  - Justice system involvement
  - Mental health problems
  - Abuse and dependence
- Use before age 18 increases these risks





Isn't there something we can do *before* kids develop these problems?

- Can we stop youth marijuana use before it starts?
- Can we delay the onset of marijuana use?



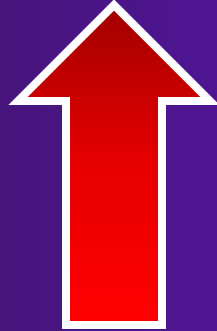
## The premise of prevention science...

To prevent a problem before it happens, the factors that predict the problem must be changed.



# Predictors are organized into two groups

**Risk Factors**



**Protective Factors**



## The first step of prevention

Is to identify and understand the risk and protective factors that predict the problem.



## OK, but can we *really* prevent youth marijuana use?

- Before 1980, nine experimental tests of delinquency prevention programs were conducted in the U.S.
  - None was effective

Today, there are over 50 effective delinquency prevention programs.

<http://www.blueprintsprograms.com/>



## Early drug prevention programs were not very effective

- Drug information programs *increased* drug use in some studies (Tobler, 1986).

These programs were not adequately grounded in an understanding of risk and protective factors.





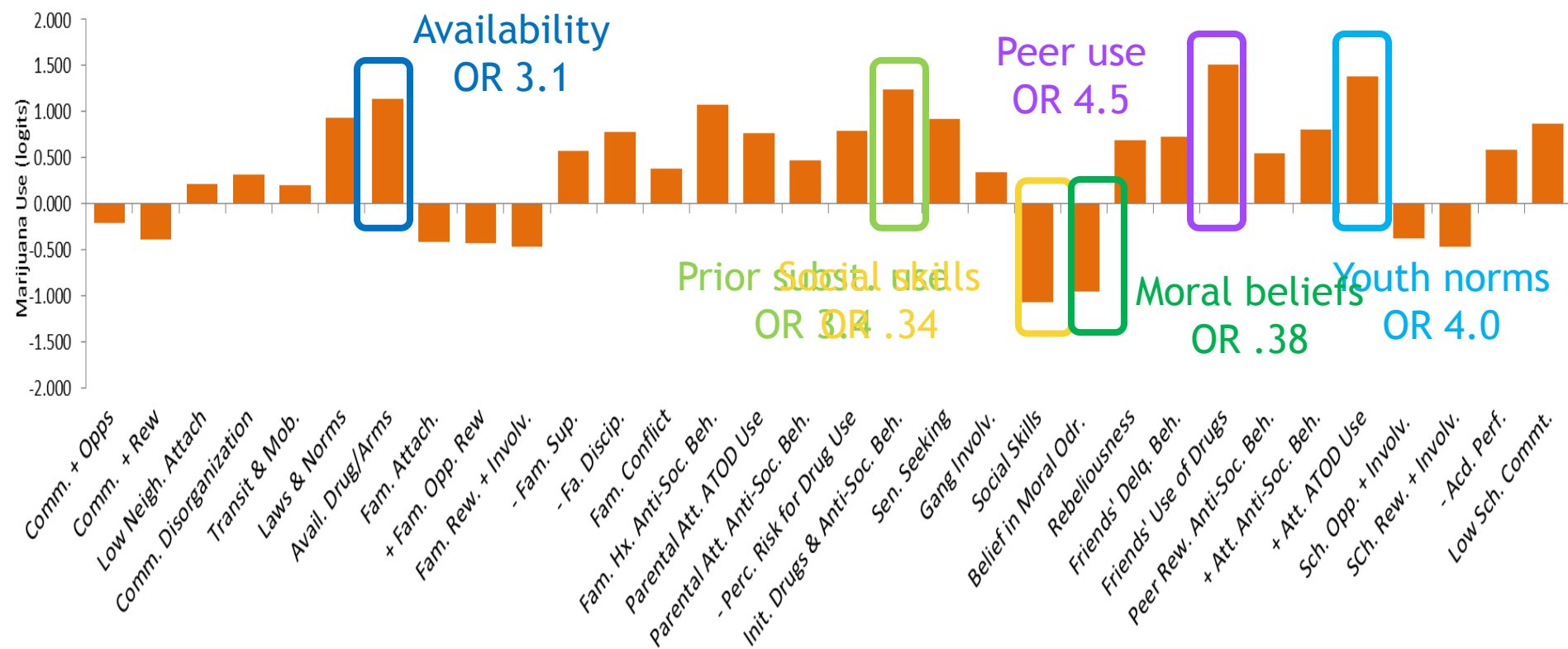


# Protective Factors

- Individual Characteristics
  - High Intelligence
  - Resilient Temperament
  - Competencies and Skills
- In social domains of family, school, peer group and community
  - Prosocial Opportunities
  - Reinforcement for Prosocial Involvement
  - Bonding (connectedness, attachment)
  - Clear and Healthy Standards for Behavior



# Risk and protective factors for youth marijuana use







# Risk and protective factors operate in the same way across demographic groups

- Gender
- Race/ethnicity
- Socio-economic status
- Region

The degree of exposure to risk may vary, but the effect of risk exposure on outcomes is the same.



# I-502 may affect the levels of risk and protective factors for youth in Washington

- Two factors will change:
  - Availability
  - Norms

- Other factors may change:
  - Family management
  - Marijuana-specific parenting practices
  - Peer and sibling use
  - Parent use
  - Youth alcohol and cigarette use

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## Voters approve I-502 legalizing marijuana

Washington state voters made history Tuesday by legalizing the recreational use of marijuana.

By [Jonathan Martin](#)  
Seattle Times staff reporter

Washington enthusiastically leapt into history Tuesday, becoming the first state, with Colorado, to reject federal drug-control policy and legalize recreational marijuana use.

Initiative 502 was winning 55 to 45 percent, with support from more than half of Washington's counties, rural and urban.

The vote puts Washington and Colorado to the left of the Netherlands on marijuana law, and makes them the nexus of a new social experiment with uncertain consequences. National and international media watched as vote counts rolled into I-502's election-night party in Seattle amid

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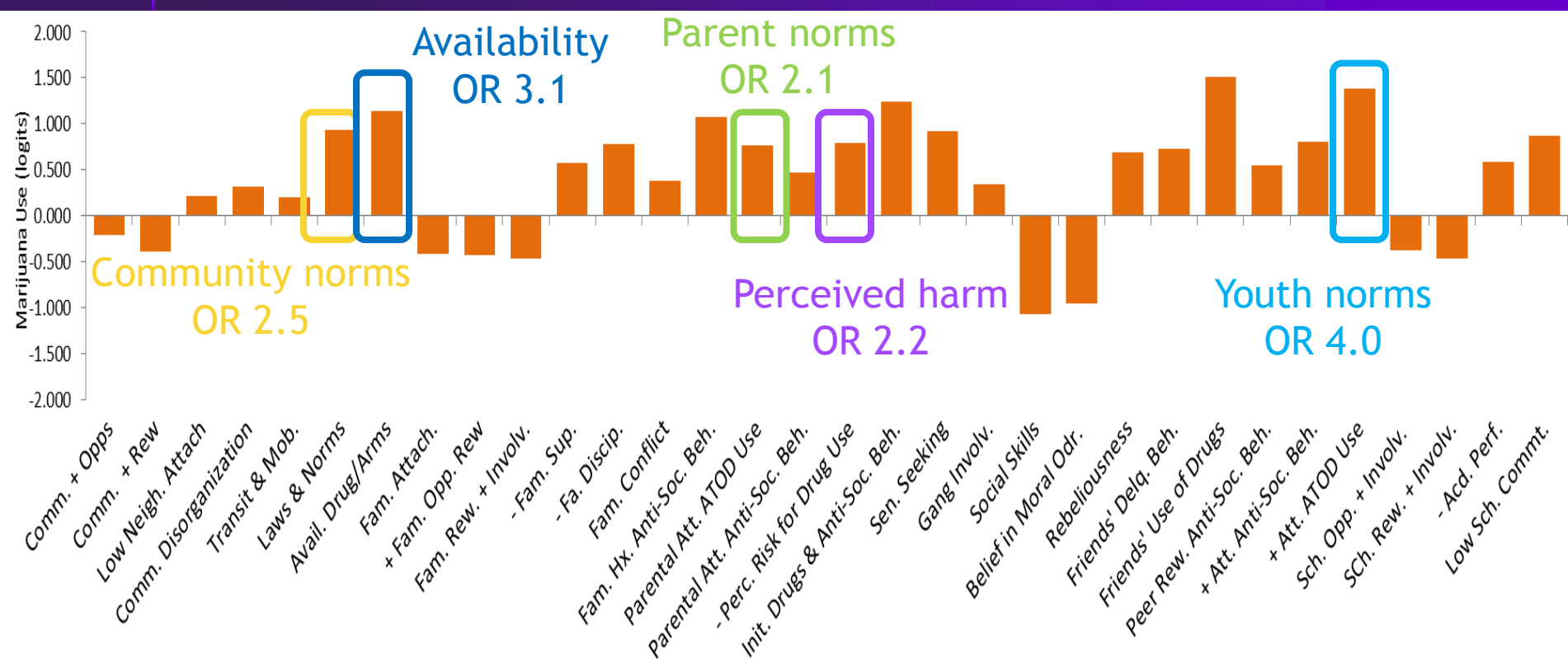


ERIKA SCHULTZ / THE SEATTLE TIMES

A 30-year-old female smokes marijuana in a street party after the election results in Seattle's Rainier Hill neighborhood.



# Availability and norms are some of the strongest predictors of youth marijuana use







# What does changing availability look like?







# Changing availability may also look like this





## Implications and work to be done

- Limit availability to youth
  - Edibles that appeal to youth
- Influence youth norms about use
- Influence adult norms
  - Parent norms
  - Providing marijuana to youth and youth use
- Address other risk and protective factors
  - Timing and settings for intervention



Thank you.

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