

Ganja warning

The National Council on Drug Abuse (NCDA) last week released its position on the proposed changes to the laws governing ganja, excerpts of which are published below.

"As the agency responsible for the monitoring, prevention and treatment of substance misuse in Jamaica, we do not support the smoking of any substance, this including marijuana, as this poses a significant public-health risk to the Jamaican population, and carries health and social implications which warrant urgent attention," said the NCDA.

"We recognise that some health benefits have been documented with the medicinal use of the derivatives of marijuana, and, therefore, support the move to decriminalise marijuana for, medical and scientific research for the production of medicines to treat diseases and the industrial application of hemp and its derivatives," said the NCDA as it outlined its suggestions. **EXPANDING ACTIVITIES** The NCDA intends with the support of Government and its partners to strengthen and expand its activities to ensure the following: 1) A sustained and expanded public-education programme highlighting the effects of marijuana use. 2) Strengthened prevention interventions targeting marijuana use among the general population and youth in particular. 3) The provision of a structured programme of counselling and rehabilitation for adolescents. 4) Scale-up treatment and rehabilitation services to be provided through NCDA and the primary health-care system. 5) Training for primary health-care personnel in treating substance misuse. 6) Monitoring & evaluation of standards of care for private and public facilities. 7) The conduct of research studies in relevant areas, such as the workplace. The NCDA is also calling on Government to ensure the following: 1) Adequate funding of the NCDA to scale up interventions and training to accommodate the increased demand for services. 2) Clarification of the role of law-enforcement officers in determining marijuana dependence. 3) Implementation of adequate measures and a well-developed system for monitoring and to ensure that fines are collected and to minimise non-compliance with the ticketing system. 4) Adequate measures to deal with re-offenders. 5) Adequate measures to safeguard against diversion of marijuana for illegal use. 6) Sufficient time is given to the public to consider the bill to be tabled in Parliament and to make suggestions on the bill. This is as per the Government Consultation policy. 7) Development of workplace policies to address drug and alcohol use at the workplace. 8) Government states that the use of marijuana is still illegal.