

Health H-2 Drug Abuse

The Friends Committee on Legislation of California views the abuse of drugs, whether obtained legally or illegally, as a medical and social issue. Our vision is a society in which the occasion for drug addiction is minimized. When drug use results in problems for individuals, harm reduction and treatment should be emphasized, rather than punitive measures.

The distinction between legal and illegal drugs continues to be based primarily on political considerations, rather than health and medical considerations. The criminalization of drug use has resulted in a massive commitment of public resources for law enforcement to fight the "war on drugs" and the overburdening of our court and penal systems, with disastrous effects for many poor communities of color.

FCLCA supports decriminalization of possession of drugs for personal use. We support the legalization and regulation of marijuana sales and use.

FCLCA encourages the preparation and distribution of evidence-based, non-sensational information, with a special emphasis on children and teens, on the effects of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, opioids, and other drugs. Research efforts should be expanded to increase our understanding of drug effects and abuse.

FCLA recognizes that social dislocation and isolation, past trauma, discrimination, poverty, genetic predisposition, and other factors can affect people's vulnerability to drugs and their capacity for dealing with drug-related problems. Our society should provide a range of programs to help affected individuals to deal with these problems, guided by input from experts on drug treatment and from past and present drug users. This includes residential and outpatient drug rehabilitative/treatment programs; such programs should be available upon request for any substance abuser. It also

includes harm-reduction strategies such as safe needle exchanges to reduce the spread of disease among intravenous drug users and prescription of maintenance doses for those already addicted.

Families experiencing substance abuse problems should have access to confidential and sensitive help and support.

The deleterious health effects on pregnant women addicted to nicotine, alcohol, and other drugs, legal and illegal, are well documented. It is essential that compassionate, confidential, non-punitive therapy and treatment be provided to addicted women who are pregnant or have recently delivered babies.