

The Oakland Equitable and Responsible Access Framework for Entheogenic Plant and Fungi use in Urban Communities

Purpose of the Resolution is to support safe practices and decriminalize the use of entheogenic plants and fungi:

Decriminalize Nature Oakland (DNO) seeks to decriminalize and make available education and information regarding responsible, safe, and meaningful access to entheogenic plants and fungi for those seeking these as a path toward healing, exploration, or expansion of consciousness. Numerous studies have shown that these naturally occurring plants and fungi are very powerful tools for increasing neural plasticity and allowing the user to self-identify personal internal causes of mind-based ailments, and to create a new personal narrative which is more constructive and beneficial toward leading a healthy and happy life.

For these reasons, Decriminalize Nature Oakland feels it is critically important, particularly in a time of increasing disenfranchisement, social division, and poverty rates causing greater trauma in our disenfranchised communities to make information and education on these powerful tools available, in their natural forms, to members of the community in a way that enables choice and agency for the person in their relationship with the plants and fungi.

The Power of Choice and Personal Agency

Decriminalize Nature Oakland believes it is imperative to give all people, regardless of economic capacity, the ability to access information and education on these powerful tools and empower them to make their own choice toward their use for personal healing and consciousness exploration. The fundamental power inherent in making the individual personal choice to heal, and to re-write or amend one's narrative for engaging with the world, is paramount in setting upon the path toward healing and personal growth. But the best choices are informed choices. To this end, DNO believes the most important first step, upon decriminalizing entheogenic plants



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and fungi in any urban setting is education. Below we provide a framework for empowering individuals in any community to engage in a powerful, meaningful, safe and responsible way with these materials.

The Seven Step Process of Building a Safe, Healthy, and Responsible Approach to Use in an Urban Community

The following seven actions highlight a suggested framework that can occur in any community to most effectively enable safe and responsible use of these materials:

1. Information
2. Education
3. Preparation
4. Application
5. Integration
6. Implementation
7. Reciprocity

Through these seven actions, supported via a deliberate and intentional partnership between government, non-profits, the private sector, and community, an urban city can create the needed pathways and frameworks for safe, responsible, and healthy use. It is important to note that these activities already exist throughout Oakland, have existed for decades, and are happening daily, but they have been pushed underground as a result of misplaced federal laws. As a result, they have become largely inaccessible to the communities that need them most. Our intention through the decriminalization effort, is to lift the veil of these activities, allowing them to surface, and expand their availability to communities that can benefit from their services. However, because of concerns about federal law, some names and identifiers are presented generically to protect those many people doing the work.

1. **Information:** Before an education framework can be created and deployed, a community must start with understanding the resources available within its area. The following entities are good sources of information that can be assembled:



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a. Non-profits, professional wellness centers, and community organizations that provide education on entheogenic plants and fungi:

Over the last 5 decades much of the research on the use of these materials has been carried by non-profit organizations or informal groups. Local community-based groups such as Entheogenic Research, Integration, and Education (ERIE), Oakland's Sacred Garden Community, San Francisco Psychedelic Society, Root Wisdom, Bloom Network, the 9/20 Coalition, and numerous underground educational programs, have assembled a tremendous amount of information and a great deal of knowledge about the use of these plants and fungi and the facilitation and integration of the materials in a way that allows positive transformation. Regional organizations such as Multidisciplinary Association of Psychedelic Studies (MAPS), California Institute of Integral Studies (CIIS), Institute of Noetic Sciences (IONS), Botanical Dimensions, Erowid, Chacruna, Women's Visionary Congress, Psychedelic Sangha, as well as national organizations such as Polaris, Being True to You, and international organizations such as ICEERS, the Global Ibogaine Therapeutic Alliance, and Wasiwaska, while less integrated into the local community, have been assembling a vast amount of information and knowledge from throughout the world on effective preparation, use, and integration.

b. County public health departments:

A good vehicle for institutional support and information of these local efforts is a county's public health department, which has assembled a number of tools for community outreach, education, and engagement, and can serve as an information clearinghouse and develop analytical tools and metrics for evaluation and continuous improvement. In addition, similar to public health campaigns on obesity, there continues to be increasing need for public health efforts to educate the public about mental health disorders. If individuals and communities better understand mental health issues, such as depression and PTSD, and how it may be impacting them, they can better understand how to access available resources to support them. General local and national efforts on mental health, will help individuals better understand how entheogens can be supportive for them.



c. City life enrichment or life enhancement departments or agencies:

Most urban cities will have an agency or department that is tasked with supporting or enabling positive community outreach. These agencies have important information about communities, as well as information distribution networks.

2. **Education:** Educational approaches, concepts, and materials should be created to enable communities with little to no experience with these plants and fungi to become informed about their powerful effects, and their safe and responsible use. Creating a proper educational framework in an urban community must include culturally appropriate and sensitive delivery of content, provided by individuals who reflect that community. To this end, offering knowledge to community leaders who can inform their community, friends, and family, a “teach the leaders” program will be critical to ensure that the recipients of the educational materials in any given community can personally identify with the presenter of the materials. The materials created should be culturally relatable, using language that resonates with the cultural language and norms of the recipients, and presented by people who look and speak like the recipients, allowing for the creation of a trustful setting from which to absorb the materials.

These leaders are also to be educated on the understanding of who should consult with a healthcare provider prior to entheogenic use, this includes, but is not limited to: cardiovascular disease, active suicidal ideation, psychotic symptoms, bipolar disorder, schizophrenia.

Education is key to making informed choices. We also understand people will make choices based on various degrees of information. However, there are five points of instruction we want to emphasize in our educational campaign to help safeguard responsible use of entheogens.

Five memes to help safeguard the use of entheogenic plants and fungi:



First, entheogens are not for everyone. Knowledgeable clinicians caution that some people should not take entheogenic plants or fungi, including people with a personal or family history of schizophrenia or bipolar disorder or who are taking certain medications.

Second, if someone has a serious condition like major depression or PTSD, they would do well to get serious, professional help before using an entheogen and to ask that caregiver's advice. [Some counselors and therapists are glad to work with a client before and after an entheogenic journey.]

Third, Unless you have expert guidance, it's best to start with small amounts, using more only after you become familiar with the material and the terrain.

Fourth, don't go solo (with nontrivial doses). Have at least one trusted friend (called a sitter, guide, or facilitator) be with you, sober during the entire journey, and commit in advance to honor that person's instructions if he or she tells you to not do something. Entheogens can amplify the whole range of human emotions, including anxiety which can sometimes lead to panic. Having a sitter gives you a certain comfort and mental freedom, and can help keep things safe.

Fifth, reverence reduces risks and can help lead to positive outcomes. In cultures that have long use entheogenic substances beneficially, that use is approached with great respect, not haphazardly, and for life-enhancing purposes.

3. **Preparation:** Many organizations, both local and regional, have been working for decades to understand and teach effective ways to prepare the users for the experiences created by the entheogenic plants and fungi. Not to mention the millennia of historical use. While there is no "one-size fits all" there can be many effective methods for preparing oneself to have a meaningful and transformative experience with these materials. It is a principle tenet of DNO that every individual human being be given the right to make their own decisions about how to heal or expand their own consciousness. The very act of personally making these simple decisions of choosing how to prepare for the experience, is critical to the future ability of the individual to have personal agency and to understand their own power through the entheogenic experience, integration, and implementation process. There are many different



ways of preparing for such an experience. And there exists a rich community of facilitators who have studied effective ways of assisting an individual in their preparation. Examples of approaches include:

- a. Creating the deep and rich connection between the plants and fungi and their connection to the Earth, revealing a deeper relationship between the materials and the user's experience with their own existence on the planet to create a deep and meaningful experience.
- b. Setting an intention
- c. Using Yoga as an energy balancing tool prior to use
- d. Using meditation as a tool for understanding the dynamics of the mind and gaining self-control of the workings of the mind prior to engaging in the experience.
- e. Understanding ethical considerations and risks such as informed consent, sexual misconduct, cultural sensitivities, safe set and setting, physical contact, vulnerability, and hypersuggestibility.
- f. Committing to not finalize any big decisions emerging from an experience until 2-4 weeks afterwards
- g. Implementing a diet of healthy food, reduced technology, and external distractions and crowds as best as possible
- h. Consulting with health care provider to understand contraindications of any pharmaceutical regimens they may be on and tapering off before having an experience.
- i. Find a mentor or community of peers that will be available to connect after an experience whether to integrate or just check in
- j. Using breathing techniques to create a similar experience to what will be experienced through the plant and fungi material but which can enable this initial experience using something very common and soothing to the individual: one's own breathing patterns.
- k. Using sound and music to help soothe any emotional reaction
- l. Other practices by facilitators
- m. Many facilitators use a combination of these methods, and we're seeing an increasing number of facilitators transform these approaches into culturally relevant methods for diverse urban communities



4. **Application:** Once the educational material and concepts have been made available and presented in a culturally relevant way, by a person who is relatable to the recipient of the information, and once the individual has chosen their path to preparation, among the many different methods and facilitators available, has been given the tools, the individual can then make an informed choice about the type of material they believe is best for them, and the most effective way for them to approach the material. In the current vernacular, the mind preparation work is known as Set, and the location and ambience of the location is known as the Setting. Equally important, and an important lesson learned from the process of decriminalizing cannabis is “dose”. Subsequent to the decriminalization of cannabis, many providers of material created edibles that were very powerful. This led to the experience among many people of consuming too high a dose of cannabis in edible form, which threatened the future of the decriminalization effort. As a result, producers of edibles moved toward packaging edibles in micro-dose levels. This lesson is an important one for the entheogenic plant and fungi decriminalization effort: it is advised to start with small doses to enable the user to ease their way into the experience and become comfortable with the materials before going into high dose experiences.

It is important to say a word here about “bad trips”, which may be better described as “challenging trips”. In the world of natural plants and fungi, challenging trips are possible. However, it is common knowledge among those who have experienced these materials as facilitators or as users themselves, that a “bad trip” is most often caused by the individual coming face-to-face with a personal issue that needs to be confronted to enable further personal growth. This may be unreconciled conflict with a loved one, feelings of guilt, a deep relationship with fear, anxiety, or trauma that must be untangled, feelings of personal failure or lack of self-worth, etc. From the perspective of personal growth, a bad trip is in the past, a bad memory; while a challenging trip means the individual is spending the time to reflect on the experience, and engage in a learning process about themselves and the challenges they faced. This is



where the process of integration is critical and as much a part of the healing process as the actual use of the materials.

5. **Integration:** Integration refers to the process by which the material accessed and insights gained in an entheogenic experience are incorporated over time into one's life in a way that benefits the individual and their community. The first step of integration is the meaning-making process around the entheogenic experience, and this can be aided by a community of peers to encourage discernment, reflections, discourse, and feedback. In the San Francisco Bay Area, there are at least 3-4 Integration circles happening in any given month and they are prepared to scale to support any increase in need. The methods of integration are as varied as the methods of the trained facilitators. The individual user should have access to an integration process that is culturally relevant for them as well. This is important because the issues that arise during the experience often have cultural meaning and an integration facilitator or integration group can be more supportive to the individual when they feel heard and understood. Nonprofits such as ERIE have been offering open access guidelines and mentorship to developing peer integration circles across the nation, and in addition, local organizations like San Francisco Psychedelic Society, the Psychedelic Sangha, and the Integration Circle will be able to participate in offering integration circles, workshops, and seminars to provide the tool sets for further community development.
6. **Implementation:** Now that the individual has been given the tools to make choices for themselves on education, preparation, application, and integration, they may need support on relating their internal experience and transformed inner world view with the external world within which they find themselves on a daily basis. In other parts of the world, where the use of these materials is more common, there exist culturally based methods of supporting this type of transformation. However, in the US, especially in urban areas, no such support structures exist enabling an individual to gain support in transforming the way they associate with the world around them. Particularly in communities of trauma, it will become very important to create deep and rich structures and processes to support this transformation. For example, if a young man or



woman that has been historically locked into a pattern of self-destructive behavior leading to violence, unemployment, or crime suddenly, after use of the materials, decides to live a more constructive life, the pathways must be made accessible to this individual to find their way to meaningful and constructive life choices. Here, the various city, county, and state programs become paramount and the public-private partnerships necessary to financially support these new life choices should be enhanced, with local corporate players contributing to the growth of these programs.

- 7. Reciprocity:** The concept of reciprocity is a part of a long history of spiritual traditions and is widely accepted within psychedelic communities. Within these traditions there is a period of time where the student leaves the local community to go through a period of trials and tribulations that lead to psycho-spiritual healing and growth. As this period concludes, the student then returns home to provide information and community service as a means of showing gratitude for the knowledge and healing received. In this case, a fully integrative process including implementation involves reciprocity to the larger community.

Creation of a “Support Team” Process upon the Decriminalization of Entheogenic Plants and Fungi

We suggest creating a set of workshops consisting of members of the community, non-profits, and government representatives to discuss and develop support structures for the post-decriminalization process.

Members of the Oakland’s non-profit community, including leaders from: San Francisco Psychedelic Society, ERIE, Sacred Garden Community, DNO, and Sage Integrative Health

Members from City of Oakland, including from Life Enrichment Agency (Mayor’s executive branch), Oakland City Council, and the Oakland Police Department

Members from Alameda County Public Health Department



A referral list for professionals to consult with if someone has a higher risk mental health disorder.

We suggest this Support Team convene around a series of workshops throughout 2019 and 2020. DNO, ERIE, SFPS and other community based organizations to convene these workshops and they be advisory only and convened to provide guidance and support to the seven step process described above, serving as a resource for the community education, preparation, application, integration, and transformation process.

Schedule:

Year one will be about education and preparation for Oakland's diverse community.

During the first year after decriminalization passes in Oakland. we will focus efforts on

creating the Support Team, developing the inventory of resources and information, and

developing culturally relevant education materials and presenters, and rolling these

educational materials out in appropriate formats to the community.



Referral Resource List:

The purpose of this referral and resource list is to provide individuals and communities of Oakland with organizations and licensed clinicians who specialize in supporting individuals needing professional level resources in conjunction with exploring psychedelic/entheogenic substances.

East Bay Referrals

1. Sage Integrative Health, Berkeley, CA <http://sageintegrativehealth.org>
2. Entheogenic Research, Integration, & Education (ERIE): erievision.org
3. Five Flavors Herbs, Oakland, CA <https://www.fiveflavorsherbs.com/>
4. Jason Butler, PhD: 430 40th Street, Oakland, 94609. (415) 689-1580
5. Valerie Rosenfield, LCSW: Orinda, CA. (510) 418-0414
Valerierosenfield-lcsw.com
valerie.rosenfield@gmail.com

San Francisco Referrals

1. Psychedelic Society San Francisco: <http://psychedelicsocietysf.org/>
2. Polaris Insight Center, 4257 18th St., San Francisco. (415) 800-7083
3. Eric Sienknecht, PsyD: 582 Market St., suite #1401, San Francisco. (510) 982-6276
eric@polarisinsight.com
4. Mary McDermott MFT: 2325 Third St. San Francisco.
www.mcdermott-therapy@gmail.com
mcd.therapy@gmail.com
5. Jessica Katzman, Psy.D.
<http://www.jessicakatzman.com/>
<https://www.healingrealmscenter.com/>
6. Gregory Wells, PhD, Licensed Psychologist: 4257 18th St., San Francisco, 94114
(415) 874-9226

National Referrals

1. Multidisciplinary Association of Psychedelic Studies Integration providers list:
<https://integration.maps.org/>
2. Psychedelic Support: <https://psychedelic.support/>
3. Being True to You: <https://beingtruetoyou.com>



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