



MASSACHUSETTS  
GENERAL HOSPITAL



HARVARD  
MEDICAL SCHOOL



Project ARCHES

Dear Millis High School Parent:

Understanding teens' health decisions is complicated. Our research group (Project ARCHES: Adolescent Research on Cognition, Health and Emotions in Schools) from the Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School is working to bridge the gap between what we know and what we need to know about teen decision-making in order to develop more effective treatment, prevention, and education programs. We invite you and your teenager to help our research group as we study why some teenagers smoke marijuana and others do not, as well as what the potential effects of marijuana use are on many of the thinking abilities that can impact academic functioning and general wellbeing. **This is not a program or research project of Millis School District or Millis High School.**

**Why is this research so important?** The political landscape is quickly shifting on issues related to marijuana use; however, the science on the short and long-term effects of marijuana use on cognition and academic abilities is virtually unknown. Therefore, it is critical to clarify these unanswered questions before marijuana inevitably becomes more prevalent among teens due to approaching widespread legalization.

**Why should your teenager participate in this research project?** The information your teenager provides in this study helps researchers to develop more effective health education programs to help students and families. The researchers in our group have conducted many studies with teenagers. Teens who have participated in the past have found these types of studies to be interesting, fun, and a unique opportunity to learn more about themselves.

**Who can participate in this research project?** School-aged children and adolescents who have never used marijuana, students who have tried marijuana, and students who have used marijuana more often are invited to be in this study. Therefore, participating in the study does NOT mean that your child uses drugs.

**What will the project involve?** There are two phases of this project: 1) the school-wide assessment, and 2) the individual assessments. We will explain each of these phases below:

School-Wide Assessment (First Phase):

- ✓ Children and adolescents will complete a very brief one-time survey about substance use and concerns related to attention among all 9<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students in the school.
- ✓ This will take place during the week of December 15<sup>th</sup>. Study staff from Massachusetts General Hospital and Harvard Medical School will distribute and collect surveys during homeroom. We will work with your administrative and teaching staff to figure out the best logistical details for administering the survey.

- ✓ The survey will take approximately 5 minutes to complete and will be confidential!
- ✓ If your child is interested in learning about the second phase of this research project (which will be described below), he/she will complete a separate form with his/her contact information so that we can reach out to him/her about details of the project and convey the need for parental consent for any further participation. This contact information sheet will be stored separately from the survey response form, so it would be nearly impossible to link your child's name with the answers provided.
- ✓ If you do NOT want your child to participate in this survey: you must email ProjectArches@mgh.harvard.edu by December 9<sup>th</sup>. The study staff will tell Millis High School who has been withdrawn from the screening. There will be no penalty or consequence to you or your child for opting out of the survey. If the study staff does not hear from you by December 9<sup>th</sup>, it will be assumed that you consent to your child completing this brief and confidential questionnaire. Even if you do not object to your child completing this survey, your child is in no way required to do it if he/she does not want to.
- ✓ If your child completes the survey and would like to be involved in the second phase of the study, we will provide you with more details on the project, give you the opportunity to ask any question you have, and will require your written consent if he/she is under the age of 18 before he/she is enrolled in the second phase.

#### Active Study (Second Phase):

If your child completes the school-wide assessment, wants to take part in the second phase of the study, and you give your written permission for him/her to enroll (if he/she is under the age of 18):

- ✓ Children and adolescents will complete 9 visits over the course of approximately eight weeks. The “block” of 9 visits may be scheduled anytime during the school year. All visits will be completed at Millis High School, but we will not remove your child from his/her classes. We will schedule the visits based on what is most convenient for him/her (e.g., before school, after school, during free periods). Most visits last approximately 60 minutes, but some may be as short as 10-15 minutes or as long as 2 hours.
- ✓ During the visits, your child will complete questionnaires and interviews that ask about many different parts of his/her life such as experiences with and attitudes about drug use, daily activities, friends, family, alcohol/drug use, and feelings of stress, mood and coping. He/she will also complete several cognitive tests on a computer that look at abilities such as memory, attention, and decision making as well as urine drug tests to screen for recent drug use. Confidentiality is critical and your child's name or any other identifying information will not be attached to any of the information provided.
- ✓ If your child uses marijuana, we may ask him/her to STOP using for 30 days. We will be asking approximately half of the marijuana users who enroll in the study to stop using.
- ✓ Your child will be paid with vouchers or pre-paid cards for his/her involvement in the study. He/she can earn up to \$420 depending on attendance and ability to stay abstinent from marijuana (if he/she is in this group).
- ✓ You can allow your child to participate in the school-wide assessment and decide later if you would allow him/her to complete these individual assessments. We will distribute consent forms to sign which contain more details about this second phase of the project. Your child

will not be enrolled in any portion of the individual assessments unless you agree to his/her participation and sign a consent form (if he/she is under the age of 18).

**What about privacy and confidentiality?** We ensure that all information provided to us remains confidential. All questionnaires, interviews, and other information provided to us will only have an identification number on them; none will have your name or other identifying information. None of the information your child provides will be available to anyone, including school officials or personnel.

**How do I find out more information?** If you would like to learn more about the study, please call Dr. Randi Schuster at (617) 643-6673 or email the ARCHES staff at [ProjectArches@mgh.harvard.edu](mailto:ProjectArches@mgh.harvard.edu). If you would like to opt your child out of the school-wide assessment, please contact the study staff at [ProjectArches@mgh.harvard.edu](mailto:ProjectArches@mgh.harvard.edu) by December 9<sup>th</sup>.

We hope you consider participating in this project.

Sincerely,

Randi M. Schuster, Ph.D.  
Center for Addiction Medicine  
Psychiatry Department  
Massachusetts General Hospital/Harvard Medical School