

## **Health Drug Abuse**

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The Friends Committee on Legislation views the abuse of drugs primarily as a serious medical and social issue. When drug use results in problems for individuals, treatment and education should be emphasized, rather than punitive measures. Our goal is to build a society in which the occasion for drug addiction does not arise.

The distinction between legal and illegal drugs continues to be based primarily on political opinion and economic interest, rather than health and medical considerations. Legal drugs such as alcohol and nicotine have exacted a higher human cost on society than those drugs which are considered illegal. Furthermore, 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. At the root of major drug-related criminal activity is the vested economic interest which drug suppliers and dealers have in maintaining the existing laws of prohibition. Therefore, with respect to the possession or sale of drugs for personal use, the FCL supports decriminalizing drug laws, establishing regulatory systems, and repealing mandatory sentencing.

The FCL urges increased support for and expansion of preventive and educational programs throughout our schools, work places and community to help foster a social climate in which individuals can make better informed choices regarding drug use. We encourage the preparation and distribution of factual, non-sensational information, with a special emphasis on children and teens, on the effects of alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, and other drugs. Research efforts should be expanded to increase our understanding of drug abuse.

The FCL supports the expansion of residential and outpatient drug rehabilitative/treatment programs; such programs should be available upon request for any substance abuser. 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.

The FCL urges that the medical use of drugs such as heroin and marijuana be available on a prescription basis and subject to medical controls. To prevent the spread of AIDS and other diseases through intravenous drug use, the FCL supports and encourages both private and public groups to establish and maintain needle exchange programs.

Approved by Statewide Executive Committee on December 7, 1996

