

U.S. Department of Justice
Drug Enforcement Administration
Demand Reduction Section

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INTRODUCTION

Members of law enforcement, educational, prevention, and social service communities are frequently faced with the need to address many of the positions which are advocated by those calling for the legalization of drugs. More and more, the debate on legalization is being given public airing in the media. Average citizens, who have grown weary of the problems associated with crime and drugs, are being told that legalization is a reasonable alternative to the crime problem that so many communities are struggling against.

Legalization, however, is not an alternative, but rather a surrender that will further reduce our quality of life. Vast majorities of the American people agree that legalization of drugs would complicate an already devastating situation. Health and social costs associated with the increased availability of drugs would unduly stress our economy. Crime would not decrease. The moral fiber of our country would be torn apart.

Those who advocate legalization have many motives. Frequently, however, they do not have answers to the myriad of questions we are asking. Legalization is an abstract to many of them. Law enforcement officers at the local, state, and federal levels have witnessed first-hand the damage caused by drugs. The devastating effects of drugs are real and lasting. It is not the drug laws, or the enforcement of the drug laws that cause harm, it is the drugs themselves.

Because we are often called on to speak to the issues, this booklet was created through the assistance of a number of professionals from the law enforcement, health, and academic communities. Members of the aforementioned communities convened for two days in Quantico, Virginia to discuss how we can most accurately frame the arguments against legalization.

As local law enforcement officials are on the front line in the battle against drug abuse, several police chiefs participated in the Quantico Forum to offer their expertise and guidance as we formulated our response to these issues. This guide represents most of the issues and arguments raised during that time. It is intended as a resource for you in responding to the questions and issues associated with the debate on the legalization of drugs. While many professionals participated in the session, the views represented in this document are the position of the Drug Enforcement Administration. They represent the consensus of the assembled group without necessarily attributing each and every position to the personal views of each participant.

Please feel free to use the guide in whatever way you feel is appropriate. The debate on the legalization of drugs cannot be won if we remain silent.

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