



## Addiction & Mental Health Tip of the Month

My name is Courtney Barks and I am an Addictions Counselor from Child, Youth & Family Addiction & Mental Health with Alberta Health Services. I work with youth in Lethbridge and area and am currently visiting Kate Andrews one day bi-weekly to provide information and treatment services to students and will be providing monthly tips regarding addiction and mental health information.

Why is April 20<sup>th</sup> known as 420?

“420” is a popular culture term that originates from a group of five high school students in San Rafael, California in 1971. They chose to meet outside the school at 4:20pm to use cannabis then look for a plot of land that was a so called “marijuana crop” that was never found. Since that time “420” has grown into an international day of cannabis use and awareness celebrated annually on April 20<sup>th</sup> (4/20). Many use this day to advocate for medicinal marijuana use, decriminalization and/or legalization and large gatherings are often held in front of municipal, provincial, or federal buildings.

Many think marijuana is a harmless drug, but that is not the case. Although there have been proven studies to suggest that marijuana provides relief to those suffering from particular ailments, for young people who use marijuana regularly, it can have a negative impact in executive functioning (i.e. plan, organize, memory, prioritize, concentration), motivation, and risk taking. Due to the major changes that occur in the adolescent brain it is important to understand that regular use of any drug will affect the brain’s ability to mature to its full potential. If you are concerned about someone’s use please contact me at (403)381-5278 or email me at [courtney.barks@ahs.ca](mailto:courtney.barks@ahs.ca) Please see the links below if you are interested in further information about marijuana.

- <http://heretohelp.bc.ca/sites/default/files/Cannabis%20use%20and%20youth%20A%20parent's%20guide.pdf>
- <http://teens.drugabuse.gov/drug-facts/marijuana>
- <http://www.ccsa.ca/Eng/topics/Marijuana/Marijuana-and-Youth/Pages/default.aspx>