



PRESS RELEASE

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Summit on Synthetic Marijuana Attracts Large Audience

Overwhelming Houston Audience Reflects Growing Concern Over Synthetic Marijuana Dangers

HOUSTON, July 31, 2015 – Today, The Council on Recovery hosted the city's first Summit on Synthetic Marijuana. Professionals in law enforcement, clinical practice, and substance abuse prevention as well as interested community members came together at this inaugural event for a full day of information about local synthetic marijuana issues, and vital information on how to help curb this public health risk. Experts addressed topics such as the effects of synthetic marijuana on the body, use among youth, prevalence in the region, and effective policy change, among other topics. A large number of Houstonians were eager to learn more – the Summit reached its maximum capacity of 295, with an extensive wait list who were later admitted to an overflow room with a live stream of the conference.

Synthetic marijuana – an unregulated, untested, and highly potent substance – can cause extreme anxiety, violent behavior, delusions, temporary or persistent psychosis, tachycardia, stroke, addiction, withdrawal, and in some cases death. According to the American Association of Poison Control Centers, emergency room cases nation-wide are appearing four times as often in 2015 than in 2014. In Texas, synthetic marijuana exposures increased 169 percent from 2013 to 2014.

"This Summit represents a collaborative turning point in education and awareness about the prevalence and dangerous health effects of synthetic marijuana use in our community," said Emily Breeding of the Prevention Resource Center, the organizer of the event. "Our goal today is to foster preventative education, particularly for youth – 45% of local synthetic marijuana poisonings involve individuals under the age of 20, and 1 in 11 Houston-area high school students report using synthetic marijuana."

Mel Taylor, President and CEO of The Council on Recovery where the Summit was held, adds: "We are greatly concerned by the rise in prevalence of synthetic drugs, like synthetic marijuana, in our community. The Council on Recovery is in close contact with the partner organizations who are co-sponsoring and promoting this Summit. We intend to combine forces and ultimately overcome this dangerous trend and help all those who may struggle with an addiction to these substances."

Co-sponsors of the Summit include the Prevention Resource Center – Region 6, The Council on Recovery, the U.S. Department of Justice Drug Enforcement Administration, Houston HIDTA and The University of Texas Health Science Center at Houston. Speakers include DEA Special Agent in Charge Joseph M. Arabit, Medical Director of the Center for Neurobehavioral Research on Addictions at UTHealth Dr. Michael Weaver, Director of The Council's own Behavioral Health Institute Dr. Crystal Collier, and Harris County Assistant District Attorney Justin Wood.

To arrange an interview with a representative from the Summit or to receive additional information, please contact Claire Holmes at 281.200.9333 or cholmes@councilonrecovery.org.

About The Council on Recovery

With a combined 117 years of experience, The Council on Alcohol and Drugs Houston (founded 1946) and Austin Recovery (founded 1967), have rebranded as The Council on Recovery. The combined organization offers the best in behavioral healthcare for the diverse communities of Texas, and a full continuum of treatment services and recovery support including the highest quality of residential and outpatient services for all individuals and families in need. The Council on Recovery is a nonprofit agency affiliated with the United Way, and also receives funding from The Texas Department of State Health Services as well as private

contributions, special events and program fees on a sliding-scale basis according to client need. For more information about The Council on Recovery, please visit www.councilonrecovery.org.

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