Synthetic Cannabinoids
What Should Our Policy Be?

Florida statute 893.03 (1)(c) defines synthetic cannabinoids, such as K2 and Spice, as controlled substances. As Schedule I controlled substances, violations range from a first degree misdemeanor (less than 3g) to first degree felonies (more than 3g) and second degree felonies (intent to sell and/or possession within 1,000 feet of a school).
In 2009, the American Association of Poison Control Center received 12 reports of individuals who became ill after smoking a product named K2. K2 is marketed as an incense product and is clearly labeled as “not for human consumption.” This marketing allows the product to be sold to any man, woman, or child with enough money in their pocket to buy it. However, K2 is widely known by another name: legal weed. Synthetic cannabis or marijuana has become a popular item online and in smoke and head shops across the county in recent years.

How popular? Since the start of 2010, the American Association of Poison Control Center has received almost 2,000 reports of people who became ill after smoking K2 (compared to a dozen in 2009). What should we do when faced with such an epidemic problem?

The rising trend of smoking what has been considered “legal weed” got the attention of our Florida State Legislature in July of 2011. House Bill 39 (Ch. 2011-73) addresses the issue of controlled substances; homologues; synthetic cannabinoids; “Spice”; “K2”; THC; Marijuana; and the crimes and penalties associated with these products. In the state of Florida, K2 and Spice, along with other synthetic cannabinoids, are considered Schedule I controlled substances (see Florida Statute 893.03(1)(c). Schedule I controlled substances are hallucinogens with a high potential for abuse and there are no currently accepted medical uses in the state of Florida. Violations of F.S. Chapter 893 are the same as the other controlled substances listed F.S. 893.03(1)(c), except that possession of 3 grams or less is considered a first degree misdemeanor, punishable with a maximum one year in prison and a $1,000.00 fine.

House Bill 39 (Ch. 2011-73): Controlled Substances; Homologues; Synthetic Cannabinoids; “Spice”; “K2”; THC; Marijuana; Crimes and Penalties

This bill concerns controlled substances and synthetic cannabinoid-mimicking compounds such as “Spice” and “K2.” Creates a definition of “homologue” in F.S. 893.02(11) to mean a chemical compound in a series in which each compound differs by one or more alkyl functional groups on an alkyl chain side. A synthetic cannabinoid is a chemically engineered substance, similar to THC, the active ingredient in marijuana that, when ingested or smoked, can produce a high similar to marijuana. It adds five synthetic cannabinoids, including the ingredients in “K2” and “Spice”, to the Schedule I controlled substances in F.S. 893.03(1)(c) as subsections 40 through 44. Violation of the provisions of F.S. Chapter 893 are the same as the other controlled substances listed F.S. 893.03(1)(c), except that possession of 3 grams or less of these five newly added substances in a non-powdered form is a first-degree misdemeanor per amended F.S. 893.13(6)(b).

Effective Date: July 1, 2011

http://www.flsenate.gov/Session/Bill/2011/0039/BillText/er/PDF

Conclusion

The JSO would arrest anyone possessing such a product on our campus and charge them with at least a second-degree felony, punishable by 15 years in prison. We will immediately list scheduled controlled substances, homologues, synthetic cannabinoids, “Spice”, “K2”, and THC as Level IV – Flagrant Offenses. As Level IV Offenses, disciplinary action would include expulsion (no option for withdrawal), referral to law enforcement, and/or financial restitution. These drugs are illegal to possess and/or consume in the state of Florida. We have taken steps to secure K2 testing kits in addition to the drug testing kits we already utilize. This enforcement, which recognizes synthetic cannabinoids as illegal drugs, will be enacted immediately.
FAQ about K2 and Spice Use

1. Where did this stuff come from?
   - It’s been around since the mid-90’s, when John Huffman, a Clemson University chemist, synthesized a substance he called JWH-018. The chemical was structurally similar to THC, the active ingredient in marijuana, and apparently quite a bit more potent.
   - Dr. Huffman was researching the effects of cannabinoids on the brain when his work resulted in a 1995 paper that contained the method and ingredients used to make the compound. That recipe found its way to marijuana users, who replicated Huffman's work and began spraying it onto dried flowers, herbs and tobacco.
   - "People who use it are idiots," said Huffman, referring to K2 smokers.

2. What does Spice, K2, and other incense look like?
   - Although it’s called incense, smoking incense doesn’t look like the long skinny sticks that most parents think of as “incense.” It looks like potpourri and consists of an herbal base that they spray with a synthetic marijuana substance, such as JWH-018.
     - Therefore, unless specifically testing for K-2, it is not traceable in drug tests.
     - Tests are marketed to test for K2/Spice. One such tests costs about $20.00 for “one drug test for the detection of synthetic marijuana – K2.”
   - It might be sold on the street in a clear, plastic baggie, small bottle or canister to mimic a marijuana purchase. Some is packaged in small foil envelopes that look similar to an individual packaged tea bag from your kitchen.
   - The synthetic substance brings about a warning label that states “not for human consumption”...”for fragrance purposes only”...and, “keep out of reach of children and pets.”

3. What does fake weed incense smell like?
   - This stuff does not smell like scent given off by real marijuana.
   - Because it is sprayed with synthetic marijuana compounds, the fake weed that teens are smoking smells like regular incense and it comes in a variety of scents such as blueberry; it often smells a bit fruity or like spearmint.

4. What are the physical side effects of smoking incense?
   - It has been shown to cause hallucinations, seizures, aggression, increased blood pressure and kidney failure.
   - Some research (not official studies) has shown that the chemical compounds in K2 are 3 to 5 times more potent than the THC found in marijuana.
   - Since the start of 2010, the American Association of Poison Control Center has received almost 2,000 reports of people who became ill after smoking K2 (compared to a dozen in 2009).
   - “In October, 2011, 13 year-old Brandon Rice of Pennsylvania passed away after months of hospitalization including a lung transplant. He smoked K2 and burned his lungs severely. The
doctors did all they could do but too much damage had been done and his body rejected the new lungs. – www.askthejudge.info

- General side effects reported include:
  - Elevated heart rate, euphoric feeling, elevated blood pressure, bloodshot eyes, and pale skin
- Adverse side effects reported from parents of teens, emergency room doctors and users have often included:
  - Extreme anxiety (possible suicide attempts)
  - Panic attacks
  - Vomiting
  - Severe hallucinations
  - Seizures/tremors
  - Coma/unconsciousness
  - Numbness/tingling
  - Increased respiration rate
  - Elevated blood pressure (reported up to 200/100 – medically dangerous)
  - Elevated heart rate (reported up to rate of 150 – medically dangerous)

5. What are some warning signs that might indicate use of fake marijuana?
   - Increased purchase/use of eye drops (to reduce the appearance of bloodshot eyes)
   - Possession of a smoking pipe or bong
   - Packages arriving in the mail for a teenager (Spice, K2 and other incense is widely sold on-line and shipped to an address)

6. Who is the typical user of synthetic marijuana products?
   - 14-27 year-olds
   - Prisoners/probationers
   - Military (use is now banned by ALL military branches)

7. What are some of the “brand names” for fake marijuana?
   - Although commonly smoked, it can also be mixed in with food or drink.

8. What are the legal penalties for possession of fake marijuana?
   - Possession of less than three grams constitutes a 1st degree misdemeanor; as such, violators face a maximum penalty of 1 year in prison and a maximum of a $1,000.00 fine.
   - Possession of more than three grams constitutes a 1st degree felony; as such, violators face a maximum penalty of 30 years in prison and a maximum of a $10,000.00 fine.
   - Possession of a controlled substance within 1,000 ft. of a school constitutes an additional charge as a 2nd degree felony; as such, violators face the possibility of an additional 15 years (maximum) in prison and an additional maximum fine of $10,000.00.