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Marijuana Use Prevention Minnesota's Medical Cannabis Law

Background

Minnesota's medical cannabis therapeutic use law,¹ passed in May 2014, enables patients with serious illnesses to use medical cannabis to treat their conditions. The law instituted a state-managed registry that patients use to access medical cannabis through one of eight dispensaries throughout the state. The law makes medical cannabis available as a liquid, vapor or oil.

A secondary aim of the law is to determine the efficacy of cannabis in treating specific conditions through the generation and collection of patient outcome data.²

This document is part of a series designed to support Minnesota's Partnership For Success grantees working on marijuana use prevention on college campuses. More resources from this series can be found in the Toolbox at SUMN.org

Program Oversight

Oversight of Minnesota's medical cannabis law is provided by the Minnesota Department of Health's Office of Medical Cannabis (OMC) and a Legislative Task Force on Medical Cannabis Therapeutic Research.

Office of Medical Cannabis (OMC). OMC provides ongoing management of the medical cannabis therapeutic law through the following key tasks:

- selecting manufacturers
- developing and managing the patient registry
- documenting health outcomes
- monitoring product quality control

Legislative Task Force on Medical Cannabis Therapeutic Research.

In addition to OMC, a 23-person legislative Task Force oversaw implementation of the medical cannabis law.

The Task Force was charged with "...holding hearings to conduct impact assessments of medical cannabis program in Minnesota."²

The Task Force [released a report](#) summarizing studies relating to chemical composition and dosage of medical cannabis for qualifying conditions.

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Minnesota's Medical Cannabis Law, *continued*

How can patients participate in the medical cannabis program?

In order to purchase medical cannabis, patients with qualifying conditions need to be included in a patient registry.

Qualifying Conditions

Patients must have one of ten qualifying medical conditions in order to participate in the medical cannabis program.

MINNESOTA MEDICAL CANNABIS: QUALIFYING MEDICAL CONDITIONS

- Cancer¹
- Glaucoma
- HIV or Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
- Tourette's Syndrome
- Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis
- Seizures²
- Muscle Spasms³
- Crohn's Disease
- Terminal Illness⁴
- Any other medical condition or its treatment approved by the Commissioner of Health

1 If the underlying condition or treatment produces one or more of the following: severe or chronic pain; nausea or severe vomiting; or cachexia or severe wasting.

2 Including those characteristic of epilepsy

3 Severe and persistent muscle spasms, including those characteristic of Multiple Sclerosis

4 Terminal illness with a probable life expectancy of under one year, if the illness or treatment produces one or more of the following: severe or chronic pain; nausea or severe vomiting; or cachexia or severe wasting.

How can individuals with qualifying conditions join the patient registry?

Step One: Certification from a licensed health-care provider.

Patients with qualifying conditions need to obtain certification of their qualified condition from a licensed health-care provider.

Step Two: Wait for certification from your health-care provider.

OMC will let patients know when their certification is complete.

Step Three: Register online with a link from OMC.

Step Four: Visit a Cannabis Patient Center.

Registered patients will be able to purchase cannabis from one of the eight dispensaries throughout the state. Medical cannabis will be available in liquid, pill or vaporized delivery methods that do not require use of dried leaves or other plant forms.

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Minnesota's Medical Cannabis Law, *continued*

[Minnesota
Medical Cannabis
Program
Infographic](#)

Frequently Asked Questions

How will the medical cannabis program be monitored for effectiveness and patient safety?

The program will be monitored in several ways including requiring:

- manufacturers to contract with a laboratory for testing the quality and consistency of their cannabis products;
- health care providers to provide ongoing reports on patient health status; and,
- ongoing monitoring by OMC on the health impacts of medical cannabis over time and information dissemination on the benefits, risks and side effects of medical cannabis.

What is the relationship between Minnesota's Medical Cannabis Law and the federal Controlled Substances Act (CSA)?

According to the CSA, the use, possession and distribution of marijuana remains illegal. In response to state medical cannabis programs, the U.S. Department of Justice issued a memo (known as the "Cole memo") to clarify the connection between state medical cannabis programs and federal law. The following excerpt is from a recent report issued by the Legislative Task Force states:

The [Cole] memo says that the federal government expects states that "endeavor to authorize marijuana production, distribution, and possession" will "implement strong and effective regulatory and enforcement systems that will address the threat those state laws could pose to public safety, public health, and other law enforcement interests."

How is the medical cannabis program different than recreational use of cannabis?

A key difference between recreational and medicinal cannabis is the purpose of use. Medicinal cannabis products are often developed with close attention to levels and combinations of cannabinoids, such as tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) and cannabidiol (CBD), and how they affect certain medical conditions. While the science is still emerging, and in many cases the appropriate dosing levels is unknown, dosing levels are derived through scientific studies that examine the impact of various dosages on patient health. Recreational marijuana is not developed using the same process and is not intended for medical therapy, but rather to induce the psychoactive properties of THC and other cannabinoids.

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Minnesota's Medical Cannabis Law, continued

How much will medical cannabis cost and who will pay for it?

Costs for participating in the medical cannabis program include an annual registration fee and on-going monthly costs for cannabis products.

Annual Registration Fee

Patients will need to pay an annual fee of \$200 to register in the state's registry. There is a reduced registration fee of \$50 for patients on Social Security Disability Insurance, Medical Assistance, Tricare or Medicaid.

Cannabis Product Costs

There is currently no published price list for medical cannabis; however, it is estimated that cost may range from \$300 - \$500 per month (MPR story).

Who will pay for medical cannabis costs?

Currently none of the health insurance companies cover medical cannabis for patients. Patients will need to cover all registration and cannabis product costs.

How is patient dosage for medical cannabis determined? Who determines patient dosage?

According to the [medical cannabis statute](#), the Commissioner of Health will, for each qualifying condition, determine recommended dosage, range of chemical compositions that will likely be medically beneficial, and identify risks of noncannabis drug reactions, by:

- Reviewing and publicly reporting (on an annual basis) existing medical and scientific literature regarding recommended dosages for each qualifying condition; and,
- Consulting with an independent laboratory under contract with manufacturers or other experts in reporting the recommended dosage for each qualifying medical.

How does Minnesota's medical cannabis law affect campuses or students on campus that may be certified to use medical cannabis?

Marijuana use remains illegal under federal law. Campuses and universities receiving federal funding are bound by the Drug Free Schools and Campuses Act, which prohibits the unlawful use of illicit drugs and alcohol by students and employees.

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Minnesota's Medical Cannabis Law, *continued*

Resources

For University and College Administrators

[Complying with the Drug-Free Schools and Campuses Regulations \[EDGAR Part 86\]: A Guide for University and College Administrators. Higher Education Center for Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse and Violence Prevention.](#) Guide for University and College Administrators on requirements of the Drug-Free Schools and Campuses Act.

For Health Providers

[Health Care Practitioner Navigator 1: Your Role & Responsibilities, MDH Publication.](#) Pamphlet for doctors of medicine, physician assistants, or advanced practice registered nurses.

For Patients

[Minnesota Medical Cannabis Program: A Guide for Patients, MDH Publication.](#) Step-by-step pamphlet for patients on how to participate in the medical cannabis program.

Citations

1. Minnesota Medical Cannabis Policy. Office of the Revisor of Statutes. Chapter 311 – S.F. No. 2470. Retrieved from: <https://www.revisor.mn.gov/laws/?id=311&year=2014&type=0>
2. Minnesota Legislative Task Force on Medical Cannabis Therapeutic Research. 2015. Implementation of the Minnesota Medical Cannabis Program: Task Force on the Therapeutic Use of Medical Cannabis, Draft Report to the Minnesota Legislature 2015. Retrieved from http://www.lcc.leg.mn/mctrtf/meetings/12032014/Task_Force_Implementation_Report_Draft.pdf
3. Minnesota Legislative Task Force on Medical Cannabis Therapeutic Research. 2014. A review of medical cannabis studies relating to chemical compositions and dosage for qualifying medical conditions. Retrieved from: http://www.lcc.leg.mn/mctrtf/meetings/12032014/MDH_dose_comp_rpt.pdf.
4. Ehrlich, Jennifer (2015, June 1). Minnesota medical marijuana: What you need to know. *MPR News*. Retrieved from: <http://www.mprnews.org/story/2015/06/01/minnesota-medical-marijuana>.