



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
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TO: Physicians, Certified Nurse Practitioners, and Physician Assistants Licensed by the
Department of Public Health

FROM: Commissioner Robert Goldstein, MD, PhD Department of Public Health

DATE: February 25, 2025

RE: Highlighting the Benefits of the Medical Marijuana Program

This memo is intended to raise awareness of the [Massachusetts Medical Use of Marijuana Program](#) (Program) and to highlight the benefits of participation for both health care providers and their patients as part of a full and robust continuum of care.

The goal of the program is to help registered patients under the care of licensed healthcare practitioners safely access cannabis-based medicine from authorized and regulated providers. The program is administered by the [Massachusetts Cannabis Control Commission](#) (CCC). The mission of the CCC is to implement and administer the laws enabling access to medical and adult use marijuana in the Commonwealth safely, equitably, and effectively.¹

The Department of Public Health (DPH) supports both provider and patient engagement with the Medical Use of Marijuana Program and encourages licensed physicians, certified nurse practitioners (CNPs), and physician assistants (PAs) in Massachusetts who may have patients who would benefit from the medical use of marijuana, to explore this option for care.

¹ [Cannabis Control Commission, Commonwealth of Massachusetts](#)

Uses of Medical Marijuana

Cannabis is an effective medication for many patients. Studies have demonstrated success in the treatment of symptoms related to the health conditions listed below. These symptoms can include chronic pain, neuropathic pain, anxiety, and insomnia, among others.

These health conditions include:

- Cancer
- Glaucoma
- HIV/AIDS
- Hepatitis C
- Lou Gehrig's disease (ALS)
- Crohn's disease
- Parkinson's disease
- Multiple sclerosis (MS)

Relief from chronic pain is the most common condition cited by patients using medical cannabis. Cannabis has a much lower risk of addiction than opioid pain medication.² Evidence and clinical guidelines support the use of cannabis and cannabinoids for chronic pain for some indications but not for others.^{3,4} Marijuana should be prescribed as part of a comprehensive treatment plan as determined by a practitioner, with consideration of alternative treatment options, potential risks, and side effects.

Patient Requirements

In Massachusetts, patients must be 18 years or older—and a resident of the state—to be independently eligible for the Massachusetts Medical Use of Marijuana Program.

- If a patient is younger than 18 years old, a parent or guardian must approve of their medical cannabis use, and they must have certification by two certifying health care providers, one of whom must be a pediatrician or pediatric specialist.
- There is no fee for patients to [register for a program registration card](#) through the CCC.
- Patients do not need to have a referral from a primary care provider to engage with a certifying healthcare provider. However, please note that primary care providers *may* register with the Program and certify patients.

For Practitioners

By becoming registered with the program, a practitioner's ability to support a comprehensive and complete course of care for their patients will be enhanced. Practitioners are encouraged to continue to provide a continuum of care for their patients once a certification or medical

² Webb CW, Webb SM. Therapeutic Benefits of Cannabis: A Patient Survey. *Hawaii J Med Public Health*. 2014;73(4):109–111.

³ Wang L, Hong PJ, May C, et al. Medical cannabis or cannabinoids for chronic non-cancer and cancer related pain: A systematic review and meta-analysis of randomised clinical trials. 2021; *BMJ* 374:n1034.

⁴ Braun I, Bohlke K, Abrams D, et al: Cannabis and Cannabinoids in Adults With Cancer: ASCO Guideline. *J Clin Oncol*. 2024; 42(13):1575-1593.

marijuana is issued. This will also serve to alleviate stigma and misconceptions about the benefits of cannabis in treatment that some individuals continue to face.

If you are a Massachusetts-licensed healthcare provider who is seeking to certify qualifying patients for the medical use of marijuana, you must [register with the program](#).

- There is no cost for providers to register with the program and once registered, there is no renewal fee.
- A certifying healthcare provider must be a Massachusetts-licensed physician, certified nurse practitioner (CNP), or physician assistant (PA).
- Detailed criteria for practitioners can be found on [the CCC webpage](#).

All Certifying Healthcare Providers must complete a minimum of 2.0 Category 1 continuing professional development credits prior to issuing certifications for the medical use of marijuana. The continuing education program must explain the proper use of cannabis, including side effects, dosage, and contraindications. The program must also educate on the topics of substance use disorder screening, diagnosis, and treatment related to marijuana.

We encourage all licensed physicians, CNPs and PAs to consult with their own legal counsel and/or legal counsel for any healthcare facility with which the practitioner is affiliated, regarding compliance with all applicable laws and regulations.

If you have questions about becoming a Certifying Healthcare Provider with the Massachusetts Medical Use of Marijuana Program, please contact the CCC at (774) 415-0200 or Commission@CCCMass.com.

Additional Information

“Allotments” refer to the quantity of medical marijuana that a patient is certified for, in a 60-day period. Please note – the term “prescription” is not used in relation to medical marijuana allotments; the term “certification” should be used instead.

- The standard amount a patient may possess at one time is a 60-day supply—or up to 10 ounces.
- A certifying health care provider may deem a larger quantity is medically necessary. This is based on medical need and can range up to a maximum of 13-14oz.
- For certifications over 10oz/60 days, providers are required to document the medical need for such an amount.

Other Resources

[Online Overview: Certifying Healthcare Providers - Cannabis Control Commission Massachusetts \(masscannabiscontrol.com\)](#)

[Requirements: Certifying Healthcare Provider Requirements - Cannabis Control Commission Massachusetts \(masscannabiscontrol.com\)](#)

[Application: Certifying-Healthcare-Provider-Application.pdf \(masscannabiscontrol.com\)](#)