

# Medical Cannabis Patients and Consumers

## Frequently Asked Questions

### **Q: How do I become a medical cannabis patient in Washington?**

**A: RECOMMENDATION:** Schedule an appointment with your health care practitioner to see if your medical condition qualifies (see [Qualifying Conditions](#)). If it is determined you qualify, your practitioner may provide you with a medical cannabis authorization (authorization) – see [form example](#).

**REGISTER:**\* Call a medically-endorsed retail store and schedule an appointment with a medical cannabis consultant (certified consultant) who will register you into the medical cannabis database, issue a medical cannabis card, and collect a fee. Bring your authorization and government- or state-issued identification (i.e., driver license) to the appointment (see WAC [314-55-150](#)).

**RECEIVE:** Once you have medical cannabis card, you are now officially registered with the program and may take advantage of the card benefits (see [A Patient's Guide to the Medical Cannabis Database](#)).

\*Note: Registration is voluntary for adult patients (age 18 and older), but required for minor patients (under age 18) and their designated provider.

### **Q: How much does it cost to become a patient?**

**A:** At this time, insurance companies are not required to cover medical cannabis. Consequently, all patients who participate in the program may be responsible for these costs:

**HEALTH CARE VISIT:** Typical office visits are covered by the patient's health care insurance; however, there may be associated out-of-pocket expenses.

**RECOGNITION CARD FEE:** Minor patients, adult patients, and designated providers are required to pay a \$1 fee for the medical cannabis card. Keep in mind the law does not restrict retail stores from charging more than the \$1 (RCW [69.51A.230\(10\)](#)). The average cost for each card may be between \$1 and \$10 (or more) depending on which store you go to.

**PRODUCT:** The patient is responsible to pay for their product. If the patient is enrolled in the state registry and has a medical cannabis card, they are exempt from paying sales tax if purchased from a medically-endorsed retail store. The cost of cannabis product may vary based on the type and amount purchased.

### **Q: Are there any programs available for patients with limited income?**

**A:** A medically-endorsed cannabis retail licensee may provide cannabis at no charge, at their discretion per WAC [314-55-080](#). You may consider asking your retail store if they have any programs in place for patients with limited income.

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### **Q: Are there age restrictions to becoming a medical cannabis patient?**

**A:** No. A health care practitioner may authorize the use of cannabis for any patient, regardless of age, as long as it is medically appropriate under the law and the profession's standard of care per [RCW 69.51A.030](#).

### **Q: What is a designated provider?**

**A:** A designated provider is: 1) a person who is 21 years of age or older and is the parent or guardian of a qualifying patient who is under the age of 18; or, 2) a person who has been designated by the patient to purchase, provide or grow cannabis on the patient's behalf.

Each patient and designated provider must have their own medical cannabis authorization form provided by the patient's healthcare practitioner. A designated provider can only serve one patient at any one time – [RCW 69.51A.010\(4\)](#).

### **Q: How do I obtain a designated provider?**

**A:** A designated provider may assist a qualifying patient (patient) with getting enrolled into the database, growing cannabis plants or purchasing cannabis products. It is the patient's responsibility to find someone who agrees to serve as their designated provider.

At your appointment, please let your healthcare practitioner know you have a designated provider as the practitioner will need to sign and issue two authorizations, one for each of you. You will need provide the designated provider's full name and street address and sign both authorizations, even if you live at the same residence.

Minor patients (under age 18) are required to have a designated provider, either their parent or legal guardian. The healthcare practitioner will sign and issue two original authorizations and have the parent or legal guardian who is the designated provider sign both authorizations on behalf of the minor patient.

### **Q: How do I change my designated provider?**

**A:** Under [RCW 69.51A.010](#), a designated provider may only be a designated provider to one patient. Patients or designated providers may choose to no longer have this relationship by completing a [revocation request form \(PDF\)](#) and mailing it to the address listed at the top of the form. This action will disable the designated provider's card within the system.

### **Q: How long is my medical cannabis authorization form good for?**

**A:** Depending on your treatment plan, a medical cannabis authorization may be good for up to a year after issuance for an adult patient (age 18 and older) and up to six months after issuance for a minor qualifying patient (under age 18) - [RCW 69.51A.030](#).

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### **Q: What do I do with my medical cannabis authorization form?**

**A:** The form is yours to keep in a safe place at home. Please do not mail or fax it to the Department of Health. With a valid medical cannabis authorization an adult patient (age 18 and older) may grow up to four cannabis plants within their domicile (pending no further restrictions), and/or register into the Medical Cannabis Authorization Database to receive a medical cannabis card and benefits ([see page 3 of form instructions \(PDF\)](#) for details).

### **Q: What do I do if I lost my medical cannabis authorization form?**

**A:** If a patient has lost or misplaced their medical cannabis authorization form (authorization), they will need to call the issuing health care practitioner (practitioner) for a replacement. Remember, copies of an authorization are not considered valid. Patients should request another original form to be completed, signed by the issuing practitioner and printed on the required tamper-resistant paper. The practitioner may require an appointment to replace the authorization with a new one or may issue a replacement authorization with the same expiration date as the misplaced one.

### **Q: How do I get a medical cannabis card?**

**A:** Once the patient receives a medical cannabis authorization from their health care practitioner, they may call a nearby [medically-endorsed store \(PDF\)](#) and schedule an appointment with a certified consultant who will:

- review the authorization for completeness and accuracy;
- compare the information to the patient's state identification;
- take a photo of the patient's face and designated provider (if any);
- enter patient information and upload the photo into the medical cannabis authorization database;
- generate, print and laminate the medical cannabis card; and
- return the authorization, identification and medical cannabis card to the patient.

### **Q: How do I renew my medical cannabis card?**

**A:** A patient's medical cannabis card (card) will have the same expiration date as the patient's cannabis authorization (authorization). To renew the card, the patient must first renew their authorization by scheduling a renewal appointment with the issuing health care practitioner (practitioner). The practitioner's contact information may be found under the "Healthcare Practitioner Information" section of your authorization form.

Once the patient has renewed their medical cannabis authorization, they may schedule an appointment with a certified consultant at a nearby [medically-endorsed retail store \(PDF\)](#) to get a new card.

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### **Q: What are the benefits for registering in the state database?**

**A:** Patients who register in the state database [will receive the following benefits \(PDF\)](#):

- May buy cannabis product and possess up to three times the current limit from any [medically-endorsed retail store \(PDF\)](#).
- Exempt from paying sales tax when buying products from a medically-endorsed retail store.
- May buy [high-THC compliant products](#) from a medically-endorsed retail store, where available.
- May grow six to fifteen plants and possess eight ounces of usable cannabis produced from their plants within their domicile. The number of plants allowed to grow is indicated on the patient's authorization form and their recognition card.

Note: No more than 15 plants may be grown or located in any single housing unit even if multiple qualifying patients or designated providers reside there; unless that location meets the qualifications of a registered cooperative under [RCW 69.51A.250](#).

- May participate in a [registered medical marijuana cooperative \(PDF\)](#).
- Receive arrest protection if compliant with [chapter 69.51A RCW](#).
- May purchase immature plants, clones and seeds from a licensed cannabis producer per [RCW 69.50.325](#).

### **Q: What is a compassionate care renewal?**

**A:** After the first initial in-person physical examination and visit with your health care practitioner to obtain a medical cannabis authorization, your practitioner may indicate you are eligible for a compassionate care renewal on your authorization, which allows subsequent visits to occur through the use of telemedicine. If you were previously registered in the state database, your designated provider may renew your database registration and medical cannabis card on your behalf without you physically being present at the store – [RCW 69.51A.030](#).

### **Q: How do I know if I am eligible for a compassionate care renewal?**

**A:** Your health care practitioner will determine and indicate eligibility on the medical cannabis authorization form. Please note, if eligible for a compassionate care renewal and you were previously registered in the state database, your designated provider may renew your database registration and card for you, without you being physically present at the store.

### **Q: Am I required to be entered into the state database?**

**A:** Registration is voluntary for adult patients (age 18 and older); but required for minor patients (under age 18) and their designated provider (parent/legal guardian). Note: Patients between age 18-20 will be required to register and have a medical cannabis card to be allowed to enter and purchase products from a medically-endorsed retail store.

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### **Q: How do I request my information to be removed from the database?**

**A:** An adult patient (age 18 and older) may complete a [revocation request form](#):

- mail the completed and notarized document to the address listed on the form
- Notify your designated provider of this request as this action will deactivate their medical cannabis card too

Remember, by removing yourself from the state database, you will be limited to purchasing and possessing recreational amounts allowed under [RCW 69.50.4013](#) and no longer eligible for increased amounts available to active card holding patients under [RCW 69.51A.210](#).

### **Q: Where do I find a medical cannabis store?**

**A:** Patients may use the [medically-endorsed retail store list](#) to locate a nearby store in their area. Medically-endorsed retail stores will have a certified consultant staff who can assist you with the registration process and product selection.

Note: It is recommended patients call ahead of their in-store visit to schedule an appointment with the certified consultant.

### **Q: Where can I buy medical cannabis?**

**A:** Washington regulations do not differentiate between “medical” and “recreational” products; however, DOH compliant products have passed more stringent testing standards and may be more beneficial to patients. DOH compliant products fall into three categories (General Use, High-CBD and High-THC) and can be identified by the three special logos found on the packaging (see [Patient’s Guide to Compliant Cannabis Products](#)).

Note: Any licensed retail store may sell DOH compliant products; except for High-THC DOH compliant products which may only be sold by a medically-endorsed retail store and may only be purchased by a qualifying patient or designated provider who is registered in the state database.

### **Q: How do I know if the product I want to buy has been tested for pesticides or heavy metals? A:**

Current regulations do not require most cannabis products to be tested for heavy metals or pesticides unless it is a Department of Health compliant product per [WAC 246-70](#). Consumers may ask the retail store for third-party test results of any products being sold on their shelves.

### **Q: Where do I buy plants, clones or seeds if I want to grow my own cannabis for medical use? A:**

Qualifying patients and designated providers who are entered into the medical cannabis database and hold a medical cannabis recognition card may purchase immature plants, clones, or seeds from a licensed producer (i.e., grower) under [RCW 69.50.325](#).

Note: The Department of Health does not maintain a list of licensed producers who opt to sell product to patients. You may consider asking a local medically-endorsed retail store if they are aware of any licensed producers in the area open to the public.

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### Q: How many plants may I grow?

**A:** Personal cannabis home grows are currently prohibited under Washington State law without a medical cannabis authorization (authorization).

- A qualifying patient with an authorization may grow up to 4 plants within their domicile, home or property away from public view (see RCW 69.51A.260).
- A qualifying patient who is registered in the Medical Cannabis Authorization Database and has a recognition card (card), may grow 6 – 15 plants, depending on their healthcare practitioner’s recommendation. The number of plants recommended is specified on the qualifying patient or designated provider’s authorization and card.

Note: No more than 15 plants may be grown or located in any one housing unit even if multiple qualifying patients or designated providers reside in the housing unit. The only exception will be for registered cooperatives established pursuant to [RCW 69.51A.250](#). [Learn more...](#)



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