

New Jersey State Nurses Association (NJSNA) Position Statement Therapeutic Use of Medicinal Marijuana

Purpose: The purpose of this position statement is to address nursing concerns related to medical marijuana as it affects nursing care of patients who participate in the New Jersey (NJ) Medical Marijuana Program.

NJSNA Statement:

NJSNA endorses the American Nurses Association (ANA) position statement of 2016 related to therapeutic use of marijuana that includes the following key points:

- Scientific review of marijuana's status as a federal Schedule I controlled substance and reclassifying marijuana as a federal Schedule II controlled substance for purposes of facilitating research.
- Development of prescribing standards that includes indications for use, specific dose, route, expected effect and possible side effects, as well as indications for stopping a medication.
- Establishing evidence-based standards for the use of marijuana and related cannabinoids.
- Protection from criminal or civil penalties for patients using therapeutic marijuana and related cannabinoids as permitted under state laws.
- Exemption from criminal prosecution, civil liability, or professional sanctioning, such as loss of licensure or credentialing, for health care practitioners who discuss treatment alternatives concerning marijuana or who prescribe, dispense or administer marijuana in accordance with professional standards and state laws. (ANA, 2016)

NJSNA also supports the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) recommendations for medical marijuana education for nurses to include key objectives including:

- knowledge of current legalization of medical marijuana as well as recreational marijuana
- knowledge of the jurisdictions of Medical Marijuana Programs
- understanding of the endocannabinoid system, cannabinoid receptors, cannabinoids, and the interactions between them
- understanding of cannabis pharmacology and the research associated with the medical use of cannabis
- identify the safety considerations for patient use of cannabis
- nurse shall approach the patient without judgment regarding the patient's choice of treatment or preferences in managing pain and other distressing symptoms (NCSBN,2018)

Background:

In January 2010, the first NJ bill for Medical Marijuana (MM) was signed by Gov. John Corzine. The New Jersey Compassionate Care Act established the list of accepted diagnoses that would qualify for consideration in the Medical Marijuana Program (MMP). The Department of Health and Senior Services was assigned the task of developing the program. Initial patient registration occurred in August 2012 and the initial MM dispensary known as an Alternative Treatment Center (ATC) was opened in December 2012. In 2015, legislation (Bill A4587) was enacted that directed NJ schools and facilities to develop policies for the administration of MM to school

children and persons with developmental disabilities following the MMP guidelines for a registered MMP “designated caregiver” to administer the marijuana.

In 2019, The Jake Honig Compassionate Use Medical Cannabis Act (Bill A20) was signed by Gov. Phil Murphy. This legislation expanded patient access to MM by increasing the qualifying medical conditions, establishing additional ATC Centers across the state, increasing the limit of marijuana dispensed to 3 ounces in a 30 day period with a review every 18 months, eliminating restriction on ounces dispensed to terminally ill and hospice patients, expanding the authorization period to 1 year, allowing edible form for both adults and minors, phasing out the 3 year MM sales tax program by 2022, authorizing Advanced Practice Nurses (APNs) and Physician Assistants (PAs) to issue written instructions for medical cannabis for registered qualifying patients, and outlining employment protection for patients: the employer cannot take adverse employment actions against employees solely based on their status as MM patient. The legislation did clarify that nothing in the law requires the employer to allow consumption of medical marijuana during work hours or do anything that could result in the loss of federal funding. Additionally, Bill A20 addressed allowance of two designated caregivers, state reciprocity guidelines for out of state MM visitor’s access to MMP for supplies, rules for monthly price listing of MM for dispensaries, home delivery services by ATCs, and creation of the Cannabis Regulatory Commission (State of New Jersey, Office of the Governor, 2019 & New Jersey Legislature, 2020).

Administration of Medical Marijuana in New Jersey

- Physicians, APNs, PAs may recommend medical marijuana
 - Marijuana, a Schedule I drug, is illegal; therefore, licensed prescribers may not prescribe, but recommend/ refer to an ATC for evaluation and dispensing of appropriate marijuana product.
- Dispensed from MMP ATC only.
- Two (2) designated caregivers may obtain and ADMINISTER marijuana product to the patient
- Patients encouraged to use medical marijuana only in their residence

Resources

New Jersey Nurses are encouraged to review the NJSNA Medical Marijuana Fact Sheet developed by the NJSNA Marijuana Task Force to obtain additional information related to specific questions about safe nursing practice and use of medical marijuana in New Jersey.

[LINK](#)

References:

American Nurses Association (ANA). (2016). *ANA Position Statement: Therapeutic Use of Marijuana and Related Cannabinoids*.

<https://www.nursingworld.org/~4ad4a8/globalassets/docs/ana/therapeutic-use-of-marijuana-and-related-cannabinoids.pdf>

National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN). (2018). The NCSBN National Nursing Guidelines for Nursing Care of Patients Using Medical Marijuana , *The Journal of Nursing Regulation* 9 (2)S3-S59.
https://ncsbn.org/The_NCSBN_National_Nursing_Guidelines_for_Medical_Marijuana_JNR_July_2018.pdf

New Jersey State Legislature (2020). <https://www.njleg.state.nj.us/bills/BillsBySubject.asp>

State of New Jersey Governor Phil Murph (2019, July). *Governor Murphy Signs Legislation to Dramatically Reform New Jersey's Medical Marijuana Program, Expand Patient Access.*
<https://www.nj.gov/governor/news/news/562019/approved/20190702d.shtml>

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