

Help Protect Medical Marijuana Patients

If you are a patient or medical professional interested in helping to make sure Rhode Island's medical marijuana law provides patients access to their medicine, please fill out this information slip and mail it to RIPAC at P.O. Box 2731, Providence, RI 02906.

Please leave any questions blank if you're uncomfortable answering them. We will keep your information confidential, sharing it only with your permission.

- "I believe marijuana should be legally and safely accessible for medical purposes."

Name

Title

Address

City, State, and Zip

Phone

E-mail

- I am a physician.
- I am a nurse or physician's assistant.

- I am a patient. My illness is:

- | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> cancer | <input type="checkbox"/> HIV or AIDS |
| <input type="checkbox"/> multiple sclerosis | <input type="checkbox"/> epilepsy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> glaucoma | <input type="checkbox"/> paralysis |
| <input type="checkbox"/> chronic pain | |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other (please specify) | |

- I know or knew someone who used medical marijuana.

"It is also hypocritical to forbid physicians to prescribe marijuana while permitting them to use morphine and meperidine to relieve extreme dyspnea and pain."

— *New England Journal of Medicine*,
editorial by Jerome P. Kassirer, M.D.

The RI Medical Marijuana Act is Supported By:

- Rhode Island Medical Society
- RI Academy for Family Physicians
- Rhode Island State Nurses Association
- United Nurses and Allied Professionals
- AIDS Project Rhode Island
- Senior Agenda Coalition
- Rhode Island ACLU
- AIDS Care Ocean State
- Community HIV/AIDS Mobilization Project

National Medical Marijuana Supporters:

- American College of Physicians
- American Academy of Family Physicians
- American Academy of HIV Medicine
- American Bar Association
- American Nurses Association
- American Public Health Association
- Leukemia & Lymphoma Society
- Episcopal Church
- Presbyterian Church (USA)
- United Church of Christ
- United Methodist Church
- Unitarian Universalist Association

The 12 state medical marijuana laws are working well and protecting tens of thousands of seriously ill patients.

Doctors prosecuted by the federal government for recommending medical marijuana: 0*

Registered patients whom the federal government has convicted for possessing 12 or fewer plants or two and a half or fewer ounces: 0*

*These numbers are to the best of RIPAC's knowledge.

About the Rhode Island Medical Marijuana Act

A Guide for Patients
and
Medical Professionals



Rhode Island Patient Advocacy Coalition

P.O. Box 2731

Providence, RI 02906

401-861-1601

info@ripatients.org

www.RIpatients.org

On January 3, 2006, the Rhode Island Legislature enacted a medical marijuana law that is now protecting registered medical marijuana patients and their caregivers from arrest and jail. On June 21, 2007, the legislature also made this law permanent.

What Is the Medical Professional's Role?

Before a patient can receive a registry card, his or her medical practitioner must fill out a portion of the patient's application certifying that the patient has a qualifying debilitating medical condition and that "the potential benefits of the medical use of marijuana would likely outweigh the health risks for the qualifying patient."

Can Doctors Be Prosecuted For Signing a Recommendation?

Rhode Island's law explicitly protects doctors from punishment. It says:

A practitioner shall not be subject to arrest, prosecution, or penalty in any manner, or denied any right or privilege, including, but not limited to, civil penalty or disciplinary action by the Rhode Island Board of Medical Licensure and Discipline ... solely for providing written certifications or for otherwise stating that, in the practitioner's professional opinion, the potential benefits of the medical marijuana would likely outweigh the health risks for a patient. (RIGL 21-28.6-4)

Has the Federal Government Punished Doctors Who Recommend Medical Marijuana?

No. The U.S. Court of Appeals for the Ninth Circuit ruled that doctors cannot be punished – or even investigated – solely for recommending medical marijuana, because doing so is protected free speech (*Conant v. Walters*). In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court let the decision stand.

What Can't a Doctor Do?

- Prescribe marijuana. Until federal law changes, doctors cannot "prescribe" marijuana. However, no doctor has been punished for "recommending" marijuana in good faith.
- Help patients obtain marijuana or describe how they may do so. Doctors also cannot sign a certification with the intention of helping a patient illegally obtain marijuana. The doctor's role is simply to state that a patient has a qualifying medical condition and the doctor feels marijuana's likely benefits would outweigh its likely harms for the patient.
- Offer individualized advice about the timing or amount of marijuana dosage or administration.

How Much Marijuana Can Patients Possess?

Patients and their caregivers can each possess up to two and a half ounces of useable marijuana and up to 12 marijuana plants.

What Is Forbidden Under the Medical Marijuana Law?

- smoking marijuana in public
- cultivating marijuana outdoors
- driving under the influence of marijuana

The Rhode Island Patient Advocacy Coalition

RIPAC is Rhode Island's grassroots medical marijuana community of patients, caregivers, medical professionals, and advocacy organizations. RIPAC believes that all of Rhode Island's medical marijuana patients should have safe and legal access to their medicine. RIPAC regularly holds patient/caregiver Community Meetings; email us if you're interested and visit our website at www.RIpatients.org!

The Medical Marijuana Application Process

To apply for a medical marijuana registration card from the Department of Health, a patient must:

- be suffering from a qualifying condition; and
- submit the following to the Medical Marijuana Program:
 - a physician form;
 - a patient form;
 - if the patient is a minor, the "Minor form"; and
 - a \$75 fee (or \$10 if the patient receives Supplemental Security Income or Medicaid).

The patient may designate up to two caregivers on his or her application; caregivers cannot apply for cards directly.

After receiving a completed application, the Department of Health then has 15 days to approve a valid application and issue an ID card. Cards expire after two years.

Applications are available at:
www.RIpatients.org/licensing

What Conditions Qualify?

Cancer, HIV/AIDS, glaucoma, Hepatitis C, multiple sclerosis, Alzheimer's, Crohn's, epilepsy, and any chronic, debilitating conditions that produce wasting syndrome, spasms or severe nausea or pain are all qualifying conditions under the law.

More Information

This brochure is not intended to substitute for reading the entire law and regulations. They are both available from the Department of Health at www.health.ri.gov/hsr/mmp.