

# Gov. Beshear To Allow Kentuckians With Severe Medical Conditions To Use Medical Cannabis for Treatment

To use medical cannabis, Kentuckians must meet certain specific conditions after January 1, 2023; Second executive order regulates Delta 8 to ensure it is safely sold, purchased

In an effort to reduce Kentuckians' reliance on addictive opioids and to provide them relief from pain, Gov. Andy Beshear today said

that, starting next year, Kentuckians with certain severe medical conditions and who meet specific requirements will be able to possess and use small amounts of legally purchased medical cannabis to treat their medical conditions.

In an executive order, the Governor outlined conditions that Kentuckians with at least one of 21 medical conditions, which include cancer, multiple sclerosis, post-traumatic stress disorder, muscular dystrophy or a terminal illness, must meet to access medical cannabis beginning January 1, 2023. These conditions include:

Cannabis must be bought in the United States of America in a state where the purchase is legal and regulated. Kentuckians will need to keep their receipt.

The amount a person can purchase and

possess at any one time must not exceed 8 ounces, which is the difference between a misdemeanor and a felony in Kentucky.

Each Kentuckian must also have a certification from a licensed health care provider that shows that the individual has been diagnosed with at least one of 21 medical conditions. A copy of the certification must be retained.

"Kentuckians suffering from chronic and terminal conditions are going to be able to get the treatment they need without living in fear of a misdemeanor," Gov. Beshear said. "With 37 states already legalizing medical cannabis and 90% of Kentucky adults supporting it, I am doing what I can to provide access and relief to those who meet certain conditions and need it to better enjoy their life, without pain."

Read the executive order for the complete list of conditions.

The Governor said that guidance is being created for law enforcement to determine quickly and accurately who does and does not qualify.

He added that today's actions are not a substitute for much-needed legislation to fully legalize medical cannabis. The Governor stated that he will work with lawmakers this upcoming session to push for full legalization of medical cannabis once again, which would further provide relief for those suffering, fuel job growth and support Kentucky's farmers.

The Governor also announced that the state will regulate the sale of Delta 8. Delta 8 contains THC, but at a lower level than

marijuana. It is not a controlled substance in Kentucky nor under federal law, and a court has ruled that it is legal in Kentucky.

"Right now, there are no checks on how it is packaged and sold. We must establish a regulatory structure to ensure that Delta 8 is sold and purchased safely in the commonwealth," Gov. Beshear said. "The structure can and will also serve as a template for when the General Assembly fully legalizes medical cannabis. That means we can learn in real-time, train our people and be ready to go."

The executive orders come after Gov. Beshear formed the Team Kentucky Medical Cannabis Advisory Committee in June to travel the state and listen to Kentuckians' views on the topic after the state legislature failed to pass legislation earlier this year. On Sept. 30, the Governor released the summary from the committee that proved Kentuckians agree that it is past time for the commonwealth to take action on legalizing medical cannabis.

Kerry Harvey, co-chair of the committee and secretary of the Justice and Public Safety Cabinet said, "Our committee met good people all across the commonwealth who are suffering from terrible chronic conditions that are relieved by medical cannabis. This is real-world experience, not conjecture. The Governor's action will improve the quality of life for these Kentuckians, but more should be done in the coming legislative session."

"It took bravery to overcome anxiety and often physical pain to stand up at a town hall meeting, but people did it to make sure their story was heard. Not only for themselves, but also for the benefit of family members, friends and others facing a similar condition," said Ray Perry, co-chair of the committee and secretary of the Public Protection Cabinet. "Each story made it clear that people are finding real relief from chronic conditions with medical cannabis."

Military veterans attending the town halls emphasized the benefits of cannabis in reducing PTSD symptoms. Some described the inability to sleep because of the disorder, while others reported being prescribed numerous medications to ease pain, treat anxiety, sleep or move their joints fully.

A veteran from Northern Kentucky, Jared Bonnell, who served in both Iraq and Afghanistan, described his daily struggle after being prescribed 13 medications that weren't effective, which left him contemplating suicide.

"Within a year, I didn't drink and was off 12 of the 13 medications," said Bonnell. "I still have all those injuries and disabilities, but I can function. I can live. I can have friendships and conversations again."

business owner from McCracken County, said "Medical marijuana is a way to ease pain without messing with your body. Prescription pain killers and alcohol are dangerous in the construction business, like mine. However, if someone takes THC at night for the pain, they come to work rested and ready to work. I am very conservative and both sides should want to help people. This should have nothing to do with your views politically."

In addition to the town hall meetings, the state's medical cannabis website allowed Kentuckians to submit their opinions online. The website received 3,539 comments, 98.64% of which expressed support for legalizing medical cannabis in Kentucky.

Visit [medicalcannabis.ky.gov](https://medicalcannabis.ky.gov) for a list of advisory team members, which includes Kentuckians with experience in health care, treatment of opioid use disorder and other diseases of addiction, law enforcement, criminal justice and advocacy for medical cannabis.

"Providers should be able to offer medical cannabis as a therapeutic option, which would potentially decrease the use of narcotics and opioid epidemic in Kentucky," said Dr. Linda McClain a Louisville OB/GYN and addiction specialist, who served on the advisory committee. "I applaud the Governor's actions taken today and strongly believe that many Kentuckians will now be able to find relief. I previously managed a clinic in Georgia where I saw first-hand the efficacy of medical cannabis. Those patients were not interested in getting high, they simply wanted to feel better."

A total of 37 states, the District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. Virgin Islands allow cannabis for medical use by qualified individuals. In May 2021, Alabama legalized medical cannabis. This year, Mississippi and Rhode Island did the same. Kentucky's neighboring states of Ohio, Illinois, Missouri and West Virginia have legalized medical cannabis.

Gov. Beshear said, "This is not a red or blue issue. It is about our people and helping those who are in pain and suffering."

Allowing Kentuckians diagnosed with certain medical conditions and receiving palliative care to purchase, possess and/or use medical cannabis would improve the quality of their lives and may help reduce the abuse of other more dangerous and addictive medications, such as opiates.

One recent study showed a 64% reduction in opioid use among chronic pain patients who used medical cannabis. These patients experienced fewer side effects and improved quality of life. Unlike opioids, cannabis does not cause respiratory depression leading to lesser mortality rates, and medical cannabis is far less addictive.

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