

Project Summary: An assessment of needs of local public health agencies related to legalization of cannabis in Minnesota

The Cannabis Research Center (CRC) at the University of Minnesota's School of Public Health, in partnership with the Local Public Health Association of Minnesota, conducted an online survey of all local public health agencies in Minnesota (n=74) in March 2024 about their experiences with cannabis legalization. Sixty agencies (81%) responded. We summarized the results of the survey into a report that was shared with the Local Public Health Association of Minnesota and the Minnesota Department of Health. The summary below is an overview of the project. The CRC is not advocating for any position and created this summary to be a guide for discussions related to cannabis legalization and the role of local public health agencies in Minnesota and beyond. If you would like to request a copy of the full report from this project, please contact the CRC by emailing cannabisrc@umn.edu.

CONTEXT

What do local public health agencies do?

In Minnesota, local public health agencies, with funding from local, state, and Federal governments: “(1) Assure an adequate public health infrastructure, (2) Promote healthy communities and healthy behaviors, (3) Prevent the spread of infectious disease, (4) Protect against environmental health hazards, (5) Prepare for and respond to disasters, and assist communities in recovery and (6) Assure the quality and accessibility of health services” (see [Overview of LPH System - 2024.pdf \(revize.com\)](#)). In other words, public health agencies do an incredible amount of work to keep their communities safe and healthy.

Why did the Cannabis Research Center ask local public health agencies in Minnesota what they are being asked to do related to cannabis legalization?

Minnesota legalized adult-use cannabis in Summer 2023. Legalization of cannabis requires many state and local agencies to implement different parts of this very complex law. Local public health agencies play a key role in helping individuals and organizations follow the legal regulations and make healthy choices related to cannabis but specifics of their role have not been completely clear. The Cannabis Research Center partnered with the Local Public Health Association of Minnesota (which represents local public health agencies) to better understand what these agencies were being asked to do related to cannabis and what type of information, training, or resources they needed to do this cannabis-related work. The goal of this project was to help guide how state resources are used to help local public health agencies be successful in addressing cannabis-related needs in their communities.

What research questions were asked of local public health agencies for this project?

Public health agencies were asked what they were currently being asked to do to address cannabis legalization and the types of assistance, training, and resources they needed to do this work.

OVERALL SUMMARY

What are local public health agencies being asked to do now related to cannabis legalization?

During this early phase of cannabis legalization, the highest areas of need reported by agencies regarding cannabis legalization were *clarification/understanding of state vs. local agency roles*. Agencies were mostly being asked to do tasks for schools and the general public regarding cannabis legalization. The most common tasks they were being asked to do were:

- Create educational materials for school staff and parents/caregivers
- Provide health-risk information for vulnerable populations
- Educate about the new law that legalized adult-use cannabis
- Provide information to parents/caregivers on how to talk to youth about cannabis use

Are local public health agencies likely to do other work related to cannabis legalization in the future?

Local public health agencies will very likely continue to play a key role in implementation of cannabis legalization within communities across Minnesota. These agencies provide vital health information to youth and adults and community organizations about cannabis use and misuse, and laws and policies. What the agencies need to do and what resources they need will likely change throughout different phases of cannabis legalization.

How can this information help shape policy and practice in Minnesota?

The information from this project suggests that more communication is needed between local and state agencies regarding implementation of cannabis legalization at the local level. Participants in the survey also indicated the need for technical assistance and resources (financial and staffing) to effectively address cannabis legalization in their communities. Information from this project can guide decisions by state agencies and the legislature on how to best support local public health agencies.

Why is this important to Minnesotans?

Clear roles and collaboration between state and local agencies regarding cannabis legalization is needed in order to protect the health of all Minnesotans. Local public health agencies also need support to be effective in addressing cannabis use and regulations in their communities.

CONCLUSIONS

What does the Cannabis Research Center recommend going forward?

Most local public health agencies reported the need for more understanding and clarification of local vs. state roles regarding cannabis legalization. We recommend similar assessments be repeated periodically given that the demands on and needs of local public health agencies related to legalization of cannabis is likely to evolve over the next few years.

PROJECT TEAM

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