

# Cannabis Research Center Annual Report

July 2023 - June 2024



In 2023, the Minnesota State Legislature signed H.F. 100 into law, legalizing non-medical use of cannabis in Minnesota for individuals age 21 and older. This followed legislation establishing the state's medical cannabis program a decade earlier. As part of the 2023 law, the legislature designated funding to the University of Minnesota School of Public Health to establish a Cannabis Research Center.

## CRC MISSION & VALUES

### MISSION

The University of Minnesota School of Public Health Cannabis Research Center (CRC) strives to **understand the public health implications of cannabis legalization** and **be a trusted source of information** to guide policy and practice related to cannabis use in Minnesota.

To accomplish this, the CRC:

- **Conducts timely and Minnesota-specific research** on both the positive and negative public health effects of cannabis legalization.
- **Studies issues pertaining to equity** in cannabis production, sales, marketing, decriminalization, and use.
- **Provides interpretation and contextualization** of research findings.
- **Collaborates** with state and local agencies, policymakers, and community members to ensure information is responsive to needs and accessible to all Minnesotans.
- **Trains and supports future practitioners and scholars** to engage in research related to cannabis policy and its effects on health and health equity.

### VALUES

The CRC is anchored by a commitment to the health, safety and wellbeing of Minnesotans. The core values of the CRC that define our work are:

- Collaboration
- Equity and Social Justice
- Integrity
- Responsiveness
- Commitment to Public Health



### A NOTE FROM THE CRC DIRECTOR

**Traci L. Toomey, PhD**

What an honor it has been to serve as the director of the CRC during this inaugural year. It has been an amazing journey to meet with and build collaborations with people and organizations across the state. We have started to learn what questions people and organizations have about cannabis and cannabis legalization. We have started to summarize, conduct and fund research that will begin to answer some of these questions. The CRC will draw upon expertise in the School of Public Health as well as throughout the University of Minnesota and other research institutions and community organizations in Minnesota. Our entire CRC team hopes our research is useful to citizens, organizations, and community and state leaders in Minnesota and beyond!

# ANNUAL REVIEW & ACCOMPLISHMENTS

## JULY 1, 2023 - JUNE 30, 2024

### PRIORITY AREA: BUILD CANNABIS RESEARCH CENTER INFRASTRUCTURE

In July 2023, the School of Public Health assembled a committee to develop initial plans for a cannabis research center. The CRC launched in October 2023. In the first 9 months of operations, the CRC:

- Built an outstanding team to oversee administration and leadership of the CRC, conduct research, disseminate research findings, fund extramural research, and support/collaborate with external partners
- Developed a Year 1 & Year 2 budget
- Established a physical space for the CRC
- Began developing a multi-year strategic plan

### PRIORITY AREA: ENGAGE AND COLLABORATE WITH KEY PARTNERS AND INDIVIDUALS

CRC team members met with over 100 people to begin to build collaborations and learn what questions people have about cannabis legalization. The CRC hopes to collaborate with state and local agencies, policymakers, and community members to ensure information is responsive to needs and accessible to all Minnesotans. In the first year, the CRC built connections with:

- Department of Human Services (DHS)
- Local Public Health Association of MN (LPHA)
- Minnesota Department of Education (MDE)
- Minnesota Department of Health (MDH)
- Office of Cannabis Management (OCM)
- UMN Boynton Health
- UMN Extension

The CRC also began building a national presence by presenting at the Alcohol Policy 20 conference, participating in the 2024 Cannabis Regulators Association External Stakeholder Meeting and the Cannabis Measurement Experts Workshop in CO, and submitting eight abstracts to the American Public Health Association annual conference, all of which were accepted.

### PRIORITY AREA: PROMOTE, CONDUCT AND DISSEMINATE RESEARCH

The CRC conducts timely and Minnesota-specific research on both the positive and negative public health effects of cannabis legalization. In the first year of research activities, the CRC:

- Launched 14 intramural research projects
- Awarded more than \$100K in funding for extramural projects to faculty and students at the University of Minnesota
- Created a database to track cannabis-related data sources
- Began shaping data sources by advocating for cannabis-related questions on the College Student Health Survey, Minnesota Student Survey and other state surveys
- Submitted one NIH proposal and provided support for submission of two administrative supplements

### PRIORITY AREA: EQUITY AND ENGAGEMENT

Equity and engagement are among the core values that define the work of the CRC. Additionally, it is part of our mission to study issues pertaining to equity in cannabis production, sales, marketing, decriminalization, and use. In the first year of our Equity and Engagement core, the CRC began:

- Building staff/faculty infrastructure, including appointing an Associate Director of Equity & Engagement as part of the leadership team
- Developing community connections via one-on-one interviews
- Identifying potential partnerships
- Conducting a scoping review: Cannabis Legalization & Social and Health Equity (Spring '24)
- Developing plans for formative research that will include interviews and focus groups

Additionally, the Engagement and Equity core has worked with other CRC cores to maintain a focus on equity issues throughout CRC work.

## PRIORITY AREA: BUILDING AWARENESS AND VALUE OF THE CANNABIS RESEARCH CENTER

The CRC strives to be a trusted source of information to guide policy and practice related to cannabis use in Minnesota. In order to build awareness of the CRC and communicate the unique value and benefit the CRC provides to Minnesotans, the CRC engaged in a range of communication activities this year. Highlights included:

- A Cannabis Research Center media launch with 28 interviews and/or articles
- A CRC website
- A CRC profile on [Experts@Minnesota](#)
- 17 presentations/panels
- Two research briefs
  - [Public Health Implications of Cannabis Use Policy in Minnesota](#)
  - [Perceptions and Opinions Relating to Cannabis in Minnesota](#)
- A comprehensive communication plan
- CRC [LinkedIn presence](#)

## PRIORITY AREA: TRAINING

Part of the mission of the CRC is to train future practitioners and scholars to engage in research related to cannabis policy and its effects on health and health equity. In the first year of training, the CRC:

- Supported 5 CRC graduate assistants
- Launched a Request for Applications (RFA) for student projects and funded two student projects (Summer '24)
- Initiated planning of a cannabis course for the UMN School of Public Health

## LOOKING AHEAD TO YEAR 2

We are excited to continue expanding the number and type of research projects that we conduct ourselves or fund other researchers to do. The cannabis research literature is growing but there are so many questions yet to be answered. For example, more research is needed to guide policymakers and regulators as they make decisions related to implementation of the laws that legalize adult cannabis use and the safety of different cannabis products. More research is needed to understand 1) how legalization will affect use

among different populations, 2) the potential positive and negative effects of cannabis use on different health, economic, social, and employment outcomes, 3) how to prevent potential problems from occurring and how to help individuals who are struggling with a cannabis use disorder, and 4) how to ensure that any positive or negative effects of cannabis are not inequitably concentrated within some communities but not others.

The CRC will strive to answer some of these questions in the coming years. CRC team members will continue to meet with and build collaborations with individuals and organizations to work together to prioritize the research questions, to conduct the most rigorous research possible, and to widely communicate research findings.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We thank the Minnesota state legislature for designated funds to create the CRC and the School of Public Health staff and leadership who support this center.

## CONNECT WITH THE CANNABIS RESEARCH CENTER

### CRC Leadership



Traci L. Toomey, PhD  
Director



Darin Erickson, PhD  
Associate Director of  
Research



Rhonda Jones-Webb,  
DrPH  
Associate Director of Equity  
& Engagement



Julie Sanem, PhD  
Research Center Manager

Cannabis Research Center



### CONTACT INFORMATION

Cannabis Research Center  
University of Minnesota School of Public Health  
Email: [cannabisrc@umn.edu](mailto:cannabisrc@umn.edu)  
Web: [z.umn.edu/CannabisResearchCenter](http://z.umn.edu/CannabisResearchCenter)  
LinkedIn: [Cannabis Research Center](#)