

Cannabis for Non-Medical Purposes

1 Introduction

1.1 Purpose

Providence Health Care ("PHC") is committed to ensuring a safe and healthy environment for patients and/or residents, visitors and staff. The purpose of this policy is to guide staff in a patient-centred approach when responding to patient's requests regarding use of non-medical cannabis at PHC sites.

1.2 Scope

This policy applies to all PHC [Staff](#), [Patients and/or Residents](#).

1.3 General Principles

Providence Health Care:

- Encourages effective communication between patients and their health care providers about prescribed medications and other therapies (e.g., alternate therapies or supplements) that may be available to patients without a prescription.
- Respects the individuals' use of legally authorised cannabis in the context of PHC applicable policies (e.g., [Smoke and Vape-Free Premises](#)).
- Uses a harm reduction approach to non-medical cannabis and supports patients seeking help for problematic substance use to access appropriate care.
- *Cannabis for Medical Purposes* is governed by a separate policy.

2 Policy

Patients who use recreational cannabis may continue to do so at PHC acute care and long-term care sites in accordance with existing policy and safety requirements.

2.1 Expectations of Staff

Staff caring for patients who are self-administering cannabis while receiving medication or other therapy from PHC must:

- Promote the General Principles set out in 1.3, above;
- Inquire whether patients are using cannabis to address medical symptoms and evaluate alternatives;
- Maintain routine usual care and monitoring of the patient's condition; and
- Engage the [Most Responsible Provider \(MRP\)](#) with concerns about potential or apparent drug interactions, side effects or other impacts related to the use of cannabis.

Staff members are **not** responsible for making a determination of whether the use of cannabis is authorized by a [Medical Document](#) or that the cannabis has been access from an authorized supplier.

Staff members are also not responsible for the following duties, but **may** perform them in consideration of the circumstances of specific patients and following discussion with *Risk Management and/or Professional Practice*:

- Safe and secure storage of the patient's cannabis (see Section 2.2. - Handling and Storage of Cannabis); and
- Assistance with administration of cannabis¹ (e.g., application of CBD cream/oil)

Staff members are not required to document the patient's self-administration of cannabis for non-medical purposes on the medication administration record (MAR) but, when aware, should document relevant factual clinical observations in the electronic health record (e.g., "client left premises, returned 20 mins later and reported 'had smoked a joint' and returned to bed").

Where patients decide to continue the use of their own cannabis staff must communicate to patients and families all of the expectations set out in section 2.2 of this Policy.

2.2 Communication to Patients and/or Residents

Expectations for use of cannabis:

- Advise their MRP of their use of cannabis so that the MRP may consider any possible drug interactions with the patient's other therapies;
- Be aware that PHC is not able to provide or required to administer non-medical cannabis;
- Adhere to related PHC policies (e.g., [Smoke-Free Premises](#) which prohibits smoking or vaping on PHC premises); and
- Request a consultation with an addiction medicine provider if they think their cannabis use could be causing problems for themselves or others.

Handling and storage of cannabis:

- Ensure that other patients, staff, and the public do not have access or exposure to the product or paraphernalia;
- Assume full responsibility for administration and for safe and secure storage of their personal cannabis including, for example, engaging a family member to store the product if there is no secure patient-specific storage on the unit/site;

¹ If use is authorized by a Medical Document and the cannabis has been sourced from a Licensed Provider see - *Cannabis for Medical Purposes Policy*.

- Acknowledge that PHC will support the storage of non-medical cannabis; however, it will be removed if left in an unsafe manner (e.g., accessible to other patients, staff or the public) or used in an unsafe way (e.g., able or likely to cause harm), and failure to comply may lead to discharge from the facility (consult Program Leadership).

2.3 Responsibilities

2.3.1 Staff

Staff members are expected to comply with this policy and related policies, and to educate patients on their responsibilities according to this policy.

Staff members are responsible for discussing and/or reporting to Program Leadership any concerns arising from patients' use of cannabis that are not addressed in this policy.

2.3.2 Medical Staff

Medical Staff are aware of this policy and the expectation to inquire whether patients are using cannabis to address medical symptoms and evaluate alternatives.

Medical Staff are aware that Pharmacy is not able to source cannabis in response to an order written by a member of the Medical Staff. If patients are encouraged by their physician to try cannabis, they will need to source it themselves. See also *Cannabis for Medical Purposes Policy*.

2.3.3 Program Leadership

Program Leadership and Management:

- Are expected to ensure staff members are aware of this policy and related policies;
- Are responsible for following up on any staff concerns arising from a patient's use of cannabis;
- Are encouraged to attempt to resolve any challenges or concerns involving staff with a patient (and where indicated, their family or other supports); and
- May involve Risk Management and/or Ethics Services in the follow up or handling of situations that arise from compliance with this policy.

3 Compliance

Failure to comply with this policy may result in disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment or privileges.

4 Supporting Documents

4.1 Related Policies

- [Smoke and Vape-Free Premises](#)
- [Philosophy of Care for Patient and/or Residents and Residents Who Use Substances](#)
- [Cannabis for Medical Purposes](#)

4.2 Related Guidance

- [Marijuana for Medical Purposes](#) (College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia)
- [Cannabis Act](#) (Canada)
- [Cannabis Regulation](#) (Canada)
- [Cannabis for Withdrawal Management – COVID-19](#)
- [Canada's Lower-Risk Cannabis Use Guidelines](#)

5 Definitions

"Licensed Provider" means a provider of cannabis that has been authorized by Health Canada to sell cannabis for medical purposes.

"Medical Document" - The Cannabis Act and Cannabis Regulations state that a person seeking to qualify for access to cannabis for medical purposes must have a 'medical document' completed by the applicant's health care practitioner (medical practitioner or nurse practitioner). The Cannabis Regulations specifies that a Medical Document must contain all of the following required information:

- a) the practitioner's given name, surname, profession, business address and telephone number;
- b) the province in which they are authorized to practice their profession and the number assigned by the province to that authorization and, if applicable, their facsimile number and email address;
- c) the person's given name, surname and date of birth;
- d) the address of the location at which the person consulted with the practitioner;
- e) the daily quantity of dried cannabis, expressed in grams, that the practitioner authorizes for the person; and the period of use (not to exceed one year).

The Cannabis Regulations also stipulate that Medical Documents must be signed and dated by the issuing health care practitioner, and must include a statement that the information in the Medical Document is correct and complete. Some dispensaries in British Columbia do provide Clients a prescription for cannabis; this is not a Medical Document as set out in the Cannabis Act and Regulations unless all of the elements above are included.

"Most Responsible Provider ("MRP")" means the physician or nurse practitioner on record as responsible for the Patient and/or Resident's care.

"Patient" means all individuals receiving care or services from PHC, including residents.

"Staff" means all employees (including management and leadership), Medical Staff Members (including physicians, midwives, dentists and Nurse Practitioners), residents, fellows and trainees, health care professionals, students, volunteers, contractors and other service providers engaged by PHC.

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