

Children's Services

Caregiver Q&A

What you need to know about cannabis legalization

Cannabis Legalization in Alberta

On October 17, 2018, cannabis will be legal across Canada. The Government of Alberta created the Alberta Cannabis Framework and legislation to set the stage for the legal and responsible use of cannabis in this province.

More information on cannabis legalization can be found at alberta.ca/cannabis.

Cannabis will be legal in Alberta, but:

- Only if you're 18 years of age or older.
- Only when purchased from licensed stores or through government-operated online sales.
- 30 grams is the most you can buy or carry at a time.
- You can't smoke in some public places - know your local laws.
- Driving high is illegal.
- It can't be within reach of anyone in a vehicle.
- Only four plants can be grown per household.
- Edibles are not yet legal to sell or purchase.
- Kids can't enter cannabis stores, even with an adult.

The Government of Alberta developed the framework and legalization policies following extensive engagement with Albertans and stakeholders to gather input on what a system for legalized cannabis could look like for our province. A strong majority of Albertans agreed that the four policy priorities government identified as foundational to its decision making are consistent with their personal priorities for cannabis legalization.

The policy priorities are:

- Keeping cannabis out of the hands of children and youth.
- Protecting public health.
- Promoting safety on roads, in workplaces, and in public spaces.
- Limiting the illegal market for cannabis.

Your Role as a Caregiver

As a caregiver, you play a vital role in keeping the child(ren) in your care safe and in reducing the potential for harm. With the legalization of cannabis, you might have questions or need more information as it pertains to the safe and responsible use of cannabis.

As a caregiver, how does legalization of cannabis affect me?

As a caregiver, under the *Child, Youth and Family Enhancement Act (CYFEA)*, you are required to provide a safe environment for the children in your care. These requirements currently include:

- Using all prescription, non-prescription medication, alcohol, tobacco products, vapes, and cannabis products responsibly.
- Storing all prescription and non-prescription drugs in a locked facility.
- Storing all potentially hazardous chemicals and toxins, including cannabis products and plants, out of the reach of children.
- Maintaining a smoke-free environment.

While this policy was originally developed to apply to the use and smoking of tobacco (not restricting the spiritual use of tobacco) in the home, these policies

will also be applied to the use and smoking of cannabis products in the home.

As with alcohol use, should you choose to use cannabis, it is your responsibility to be safe and consider the impact on the children in your care. This includes recognizing circumstances where alcohol or drug use are an emotional trigger for a child in your home.

How should I talk to the children in my care about cannabis?

Similar to alcohol and cigarettes, those under the age of 18 are not permitted to purchase or use cannabis. As a caregiver of children and youth, it is a good idea to talk with the children or youth in your care to reinforce the rules around cannabis.

For information, resources and tools on how to talk with kids about cannabis and other drugs, visit:

- The Canadian Centre on Substance Use and Addiction at ccdus.ca. (The Effects of Cannabis Use during Adolescence guide is available at www.ccsa.ca/Resource%20Library/CCSA-Effects-of-Cannabis-Use-during-Adolescence-Report-2015-en.pdf.)
- Drug Free Kids Canada at drugfreekidscanada.org

What about medical marijuana?

If a child in your care is prescribed medical marijuana, please consult with the caseworker who will make sure that the appropriate approvals are in place.

What should I do if a child or youth ingests or is exposed to cannabis?

It is important to know there are health risks to children when they are exposed to cannabis products and second-hand cannabis smoke.

As a caregiver, you are responsible for the safety and well-being of the children in your care. That includes ensuring you are providing a smoke-free home and that you are locking up any unsafe substance, including cannabis.

If a child accidentally ingests cannabis and shows signs of distress, call the Poison & Drug Information Service toll-free at 1-800-332-1414, or Health Link by dialing 811 (1-866-408-5465 for internet phone users), or 911.

Are there any other resources to learn more about cannabis and legalization in Alberta?

For general information on the legalization of cannabis and other resources, visit alberta.ca/cannabis

For information on the health risks associated with the use of cannabis and other harm reduction resources for parents, caregivers, educators, and health professionals, visit drugsafe.ca (Alberta Health Services).

What else do I need to know?

If you have any questions at all, please contact your caseworker, foster care worker, or kinship care support worker who will find the answers that you need.

Over time, as more is known about the practical impacts of legalized cannabis and other questions that come up, policy and supports for caregivers will be further clarified.