



MEDICAL MARIJUANA ACCESS IN THE UNITED STATES

A Patient-Focused Analysis of the Patchwork of State Laws

For over a decade, Americans for Safe Access (ASA), the nation's largest medical cannabis patient advocacy organization, has engaged state governments, the courts, and regulators to improve the development and implementation of state medical cannabis laws. This experience has taught us how to assess whether or not state laws meet the practical needs of patients, and it has provided us with the tools to advocate for programs that will better meet those needs.

The “**Medical Marijuana Access in the US: A Patient-Focused Analysis of the Patchwork of State Laws,**” is an annual report that evaluates the array of differing laws across the country from a patient's perspective. The grade for each state medical cannabis program is based on how well it meets the needs of patients in five categories and up to twenty-five (25) bonus points were awarded to states that made statutory or regulatory improvements, or prevented harmful changes from taking effect. ASA developed this criteria over several years, based on a series of over 100 public meetings across the U.S. and surveys of our 100,000+ members.

Each of the five categories has a possible 100 points:

- 1) Patients' Rights and Protection from Discrimination
- 2) Access to Medicine
- 3) Ease of Navigation
- 4) Functionality
- 5) Product Safety Protocols

Average Grade for State Medical Cannabis Programs

Patients' Rights	D-
Access to Medicine	F
Ease of Navigation	C-
Functionality	D-
Product Safety	F

Overall Score	D-
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New Additions to 2016 Report

Product safety and quality assurance, are the focus of the new rubric employed in this latest report on state programs. While states got credit in our original report for implementing regulations based on the AHPA and AHP, for 2016 we have taken a far more fine-grained approach to evaluating the extent to which each state program has adopted the recognized industry standards for everything from cultivation, manufacturing and distribution, to laboratory testing for product identity and purity.

Impact on Medical Cannabis Patients

Generally speaking, the legal landscape for medical cannabis patients at the state level continues to improve. Twenty three states and D.C. have now legalized medical cannabis, and 17 other states have some limited form of medical cannabis laws. **However, as of January 2016, none of the state laws adopted thus far can be considered ideal from a patient's standpoint.**

Patient advocates across the country continue to fight for medical cannabis laws that both protect patient access and ensure product safety. Advocates spend thousands of hours every year in legislative briefings, and administrative hearings — analyzing new regulations and laws, and lobbying their elected officials — to help move their state closer to a functioning medical cannabis program. **The good news is, these efforts are having a true impact on individual patients. Here are a few of their stories.**

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MEDICAL MARIJUANA ACCESS IN THE U.S.

A Patient-Focused Analysis of the Patchwork of State Laws

Jeanne M. Sauro, Massachusetts

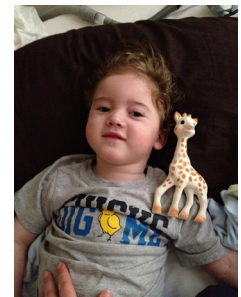
In 2013, Jeanne M. Sauro, a now medical cannabis activist, was diagnosed with stage 3 breast cancer. She completed treatment in 2014, and although she survived cancer, the medicines they used to treat her left her with chronic and excruciating bone pain. She began taking cannabis and according to her, "The result was miraculous, and the pain disappeared." **Thanks to Governor Charlie Baker who pushed to get dispensaries open more quickly in the state in 2015, there are now four dispensaries operating in the state, and Jeanne no longer has to travel to Maine to purchase her medicine.**



Governor Baker & Jeanne Sauro

Jagger Cotte, Georgia

Five year old Jagger Cotte was born with Leigh's Syndrome, a rare and terminal Mitochondrial disease. Jagger suffers from chronic lung issues, muscle pain, cardiopulmonary, seizures and much more. He is on 19 different medications to try to control his symptoms. Jagger's parents, Annett and Sebastian, moved him to Colorado to treat his symptoms with medical cannabis. As a result, his seizures and muscle pain decreased dramatically and he began smiling again for the first time in years. He has surpassed his life expectancy. **In 2015, Georgia passed HB1 introduced by Representative Allen Peake, and while they cannot obtain this medicine in the state, the Cotte's were able to return home and legally possess and use cannabis oil for Jagger.** This year, Representative Peake filed HB 722 which will expand the program to 17 diagnoses and include production and distribution within the state.



Jagger Cotte

Morgan Jones, New York

Morgan Jones has Dravet Syndrome, a rare, life-threatening form of epilepsy which, at the age of five, has left her unable to walk or communicate. She has tried almost every medication approved by the FDA for the treatment of epilepsy, yet none have worked. These medications have also caused kidney stones, ulcerative colitis, and respiratory complications. **New York opened its first medical marijuana dispensaries January 7th, thanks mostly to the 18-year effort of Assemblyman Richard Gottfried.** The program allows medical cannabis for certified patients who have one of ten conditions, including epilepsy. Once she is registered, Morgan can take the cannabis oil her mother, Kate, hopes will help stop her seizures with minimal side effects, as it has in other patients with the same condition. "We are so excited to finally have safe and legal access to cannabis oil, like patients in other states. It is the first step towards a bright, healthy, and hopefully seizure free future for our daughter."



Morgan Jones

Caitlyn and Riley Mcardle, Massachusetts

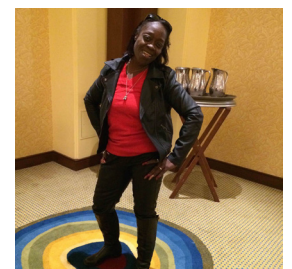
Identical twins Caitlyn and Riley Mcardle were both diagnosed with autism at the age of three. Now five, Riley is still non-verbal, has sensory issues, and is unable to attend school. While Caitlyn is in school, she is semi-verbal and also suffers from ADHD and hyperactivity. Both girls have been on numerous medications that have helped with some of their issues, but their mother, Emily, worries about the lack of long-term testing on these pharmaceuticals, particularly on pediatric patients. **With the Natalie M. LaPrade Maryland Medical Cannabis Commission adoption of new stringent safety regulations, Emily said she is, "Extremely interested and excited to try medical cannabis with her girls to see if it can help with sensory issues, sleep and other issues associated with autism and ADHD."**



Caitlyn and Riley Mcardle

Tamara Howard, California

Fifty-one year old mother and grandmother Tamara Howard suffers from renal kidney failure. She says, "Medical cannabis gives me an appetite and keeps me from being depressed." As a transplant candidate, Tamra was relieved when the Governor of California approved AB258 in July, 2015. The measure protects medical cannabis patients from being excluded from the transplant list which, if not protected, would be devastating for Tamra. **Thanks in part to the efforts of Assembly Member Marc Levine who introduced the legislation, Tamra is currently on the transplant list, and able to use her medicine without fear of losing her spot on the list.**



Tamara Howard

