



Office of the Director

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Dear Arizona Physician,

Thank you for your interest in the effective implementation of the AZ Medical Marijuana Act. We realize that many Arizona physicians may not yet feel comfortable with or fully informed about medicinal marijuana. It is likely that some of your patients will have questions for you about medical marijuana or perhaps request a certification from you. Given your established relationships with your patients, you are in the best position to determine if medical marijuana is likely to be beneficial for them.

To assist you, we have reviewed numerous articles and sources of information about the medical use of marijuana. At this point, the most comprehensive, well researched, and readable resource we have come across was published in 2000 by the Institute of Medicine (IOM) called [Marijuana as Medicine-The Science Beyond the Controversy](#). You can read the [book](#) online and search more easily for specific information you may be seeking. This book is based on the 1999 IOM report *Marijuana and Medicine: Assessing the Science Base*.

The report examined research on marijuana's effect in the body and its ability to treat specific medical conditions. The research team also compared the effectiveness of using marijuana versus FDA-approved medicines to treat numerous specific disorders. This is a great resource for those who want scientifically sound medical information on marijuana.

We believe it is important for Arizona physicians to be informed about marijuana as a new legal treatment option in Arizona (beginning in mid April) as you make decisions about managing debilitating medical conditions in your patients. In other states that have medical marijuana laws, the vast majority of physicians behave ethically and responsibly, only writing certifications for patients that have true debilitating medical conditions- and only when it is believed that Cannabis will effectively manage their patient's medical condition.

However, in most states, there are a handful of physicians that write certifications after only a cursory review of a patient's medical condition. This creates an environment whereby recreational users, seeking the legal protections that the Act provides, seek certifications to support their use of marijuana. Over time, this creates a largely recreational program. The ADHS crafted a regulatory program that sets the stage for what we believe can be the first true medical marijuana program in the country by setting expectations regarding the clinical assessment that is required in order to write a medical marijuana certification. The [Physician Certification Form](#) can be found on [our website](#).

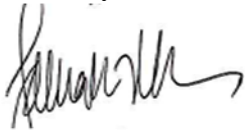
We expect Arizona physicians to:

- Make or confirm a diagnosis of a debilitating medical condition, as defined in [A.R.S. § 36-2801](#), for the qualifying patient;
- Establish a medical record for the qualifying patient and maintain the qualifying patient's medical record as required in [A.R.S. § 12-2297](#);
- Conduct an in-person physical examination of the qualifying patient appropriate to the qualifying patient's presenting symptoms and the debilitating medical condition the physician diagnosed or confirmed;
- Review the qualifying patient's medical records, including medical records from other treating physicians from the previous 12 months, the qualifying patient's responses to conventional medications and medical therapies, and the qualifying patient's profile on the [Arizona Board of Pharmacy Controlled Substances Prescription Monitoring Program](#) database;
- Explain the potential risks and benefits of the medical use of marijuana to the qualifying patient, or if applicable, the qualifying patient's custodial parent or legal guardian; and
- Attest that, in the physician's professional opinion, the qualifying patient is likely to receive therapeutic or palliative benefit from the qualifying patient's medical use of marijuana to treat or alleviate the qualifying patient's debilitating medical condition.

In addition, if the physician refers the qualifying patient, or if applicable, the qualifying patient's custodial parent or legal guardian, to a dispensary, the physician must disclose to the qualifying patient, or if applicable, the qualifying patient's custodial parent or legal guardian, any personal or professional relationship the physician has with the dispensary.

Thank you for your support in making Arizona's medical marijuana program the best in the country.

Sincerely,



Laura K. Nelson, M.D.
Chief Medical Officer



Will Humble
Director