



**Illinois
Cannabis
Patients
Association**

Illinois Cannabis Patients Association
1321 N. Milwaukee Ave., PMB #443
Chicago, IL 60622
inquiries@illinoiscannabispatients.org
847-341-0591 www.illinoiscannabispatients.org

Veterans Affairs Position on Medical Cannabis **Patients may use cannabis in states allowing it**

The U.S. **Department of Veterans Affairs** (VA) has announced that it will not prevent veterans from using cannabis in states with medical cannabis laws. Veterans had sought this policy clarification for several years.

The Veterans Health Directive offers guidance on the use and access to medical cannabis for veteran patients in the 14 states with medical cannabis programs. Although VA doctors still may not recommend cannabis for treatment (because it remains a Schedule 1 narcotic under federal law), patients under VA care will be able to receive other doctors' recommendations for cannabis and continue with their VA healthcare. Previously, patients in medical cannabis states could have been refused pain medications if they were using cannabis for therapeutic purposes with the recommendation of a non-VA doctor.

Pain management appropriately is a high priority in the VA. In the past, veterans were subjected to repeated drug testing and were denied pain medication if they tested positive for cannabis. Now, with the VA's support, veterans can work with their doctors to create a pain control program designed individually for each veteran. No longer will they be prosecuted or denied treatment based on cannabis use.

Jim Champion, a veteran with multiple sclerosis, had this to say about the VA directive: "As a disabled veteran and my wife as my caregiver, we applaud the VA on their efforts to help our veterans. Unfortunately, for many, including myself, this new ruling only benefits veterans in states where medical cannabis is legal."

Another veteran patient, Jay Waldroup, stated: "It needs to spur federal change of the scheduling of cannabis."

Darren Stewart, a disabled veteran of the USMC, was injured three times from 1991-1992 and was forced out of the Marine Corps on a medical discharge due to those injuries. He has had surgeries to try and repair the damage to his back, but unfortunately is left with excruciating pain. He directed his comments to the Illinois State Representatives, "Please allow me to use a safer medication than the addictive and dangerous pharmaceuticals that the VA is currently prescribing for my conditions. Medical cannabis will not kill me, but I am afraid that the pharmaceuticals will."

Illinois cannabis patients are hoping that lawmakers will pass Senate Bill 1381 this November during the veto session and allow them safe and legal access to this medicine.

The Illinois Cannabis Patients Association – because patients are not criminals