



Illinois' Alternative to Opioids Act: What Patients Need to Know

In August 2018, Illinois Governor Bruce Rauner signed into law the Alternative to Opioids Act, which allows Illinois patients who would otherwise be prescribed an opioid to choose to try medical cannabis instead. In addition, the Act streamlines several aspects of the application process and makes other important changes for patients.

Many aspects of the new law will require rulemaking, which must, by law, be completed for review by December 2018, and changes to the technology used to process patient applications. As a result, there will be a delay in implementing these aspects of the legislation. To help clarify, here are key provisions.

For questions, please contact IDPH at dph.medicalcannabis@illinois.gov.

Effective Immediately

- Patients with one of the 41 debilitating conditions will no longer need to submit fingerprints or consent to a background check as part of their application.
- No business or person may charge patients for help filling out applications. If a patient needs help, they can go to a participating local public health department ([full list here](#)) for help at no charge. Most dispensaries ([MCAI member list](#)) can also help a patient fill out the application at no charge.
- Certifying physicians are required to have a relationship with the patient established at a physician's office, hospital, or other healthcare facility and the physician must have an ongoing responsibility for the patient's assessment, care, and treatment.

Effective Subject to Rulemaking and Updated Technology (early 2019 estimate)

- Patients who would otherwise be prescribed an opioid may participate in the medical cannabis program through the Alternative to Opioids Pilot Program by taking their certification form to the dispensary of their choice.
- Patients with one of the 41 debilitating conditions will receive provisional access for up to 90 days to the medical cannabis program upon completion of their application online.