

Public Service Announcement: Medical Marijuana Misconceptions
Champions for a Drug-Free Grant County

Champions for a Drug-Free Grant County is a youth substance use prevention coalition funded through the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Our Drug Free Communities (DFC) Grant employs one full-time Program Director who works with individuals and organizations in the community to reduce risk factors and increase protective factors for youth, with a specific focus on alcohol and marijuana. Over the last four months, our Program Director has presented to all four City Councils and the Fiscal Court on the topic of medical marijuana. Unfortunately, many aspects remain misunderstood. As the issue of medical marijuana business and industry will be placed on the ballot for a vote in November, it is crucial that information be shared directly with residents. We implore our community to help us share the facts of the issue to the extent that they are able to do so.

Please Note: While legislation uses the scientific name, cannabis, our coalition uses the common name, marijuana, as it is the term individuals are more familiar with.

1. **UNDERSTANDING THE BALLOT.** Medical marijuana was legalized by Senate Bill 47 in the 2023 Legislative Session and amended by House Bill 829 in the 2024 Legislative Session with an effective date of January 1, 2025. *Residents of Grant County are not voting whether or not it should be legal to use marijuana for 'medicinal' purposes.* This decision has already been made by state legislators. Residents are voting whether or not marijuana business and industry such as growers, processors, producers - all of which must be done indoors per state legislation - and dispensaries should be allowed to operate within Grant County. In order to cast an informed vote, the nature of the marijuana business and industry must be understood.
2. **MEDICAL MARIJUANA BUSINESS AND INDUSTRY.** As marijuana is still illegal at the federal level, it is not regulated by the Food & Drug Administration (FDA) as a prescription medication. *Doctors will not be writing prescriptions for marijuana products that are covered by an insurance company and filled by a pharmacy.* Individuals with qualifying conditions, outlined by state legislation, will seek a written certification or recommendation from their physician to use marijuana for 'medicinal' purposes and then apply for a medical marijuana card. Once an individual is a medical marijuana cardholder, they will purchase marijuana based on their preference of consumption (i.e. an edible, a vapor product for those over 21, etc.) from a dispensary out-of-pocket. *All medical marijuana business and industry is sales and excise tax exempt.* There is no financial benefit to our community for entities such as our public schools that rely on tax revenue.
3. **IMPACT ON YOUTH.** Data shows that legalization of marijuana increases youth use because it decreases perception of harm. For our young people, the acceptance of something as legal automatically means it must be safe. This thinking is compounded with marijuana - a 'natural plant' is not questioned to be anything other than healthy. For example, as we continue to struggle to decrease youth vaping, the number of vape shops in Grant County has increased from one to five in, approximately, the last year

and a half. What we are *telling* our youth about the risks and dangers of vaping differs from what they are *seeing* in our community where the advertisement and promotion of various products is becoming 'the norm'. We are sending conflicting messages to our young people. Allowing marijuana business and industry to operate in Grant County will only continue to reinforce to our youth that it is acceptable and normal.

These points are by no means all aspects of medical marijuana business and industry that need to be considered. They are simply the most relevant for residents to consider at this time to cast an informed vote on Election Day. Information around this issue continues to evolve quickly and we will continue to work diligently to share vital information with the appropriate parties in a timely manner. Questions from the community can be submitted via email grantcountychampions@gmail.com so that we can provide a written response that can be referred back to, if needed. We will respond at our earliest convenience but appreciate your patience as some questions may require research and/or clarification from the appropriate parties before a response is given. All individuals and/or organizations who submit a question will remain anonymous but the answers to questions submitted will be publicized and shared on our website and Facebook page so that we can keep the community informed with transparency and integrity.