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Suggested text in body of newsletter:

Community members in Hartford, VT will vote on whether to allow retail cannabis stores to open in the Town of Hartford on March 1, 2022. We urge you to follow these links to read more about topics of concern to Hartford community members before the vote:

1. Why do we use the term “cannabis” instead of “marijuana”?
2. How will cannabis be sold in Vermont? (link to summary of retail cannabis regulations)
3. How can I talk with my kids about cannabis, and what resources can HCC provide to help? (link to youth prevention info)
4. What do adults aged 21 or over need to know about retail cannabis and safer cannabis use? (link to safer adult use info)

## 1. How will retail cannabis be sold in Vermont?

Why do these documents use the word “cannabis” instead of “marijuana”?

- In the early 20th century, the term “marijuana” was used by members of the federal government to create an association between the use of the cannabis plant and minority racial groups in the Southern and Southwestern United States. The federal policy decision to codify the use of the term “marijuana” in the 1937 Marijuana Tax Act was motivated by racism, xenophobia, and prejudice.<sup>1,2</sup> Switching to “cannabis” instead of “marijuana” removes racially coded language from our vocabulary. Additionally, current legislation in the state of Vermont regarding the plant *Cannabis sativa L.* uses the term “cannabis.” Any information related to regulatory efforts in Vermont should also use the term “cannabis” to avoid confusion.

Definitions and acronyms:

- CCB<sup>3</sup>: Cannabis Control Board
- Cannabinoid: chemicals produced by the cannabis plant that are similar to chemicals that are produced by the human body.<sup>4</sup>
- THC: tetrahydrocannabinol, a class of chemicals contained in cannabis responsible for producing psychoactive effects.<sup>4</sup> THC compounds are one type of cannabinoid that the cannabis plant produces.
- CBD: cannabidiol, another class of chemicals produced by the cannabis plant.<sup>4</sup> Unlike THC compounds, CBD does not produce a psychoactive “high.”<sup>4</sup>
- Dispensary: business location that sells cannabis, means the same thing as a “retail cannabis store.”<sup>3</sup> This document uses the term “retail cannabis store” to distinguish places where cannabis is sold that are accessible to the general public from medical cannabis stores that are only accessible to qualified medical patients.
- Cultivator<sup>3</sup>: person or business that grows cannabis, also commonly known as a “grower.”
- Municipality<sup>3</sup>: a town, city, or incorporated village.

Key facts about purchasing retail cannabis in Vermont:

How will cannabis retail locations work?

- Only people aged 21 or over may purchase, use, or possess cannabis from retail cannabis stores.<sup>5</sup>
- Retail cannabis stores will be required to check for a valid ID at the door before allowing customers inside the store.<sup>5</sup>

- You must be 21 or older to work for a retail cannabis store, cannabis cultivator, or a cannabis product manufacturer.<sup>6</sup>
- The state of Vermont prohibits cannabis retailers from being located within 500 feet of a school or on any property adjacent to a school. The same rules apply to any property owned or maintained by a school. Local CCBs may impose additional rules to limit the location of cannabis stores.<sup>7,8</sup>
- Advertising of cannabis products to the general public is not allowed. Billboards advertising cannabis that are visible to the general public are not allowed. Window advertisements or displays of cannabis products that can be viewed from outside a retail cannabis store are not allowed.<sup>5</sup> See Proposed Rule 2 for additional details.

What regulations apply to cannabis sold in Vermont?

- All cannabis products must be tested by an independent laboratory to ensure there are no contaminants before sale. Examples of contaminants that laboratories must test for include pesticide residue, fungal contamination, and pathogenic bacteria.<sup>5</sup>
- No psychoactive chemicals other than those that naturally occur in the cannabis plant may be added to cannabis products.<sup>5</sup> Examples of psychoactive chemicals banned from retail cannabis products include alcohol (found in fermented fruits and grains), caffeine (found in black tea and coffee), and nicotine (found in tobacco), which are not produced by the cannabis plant.
- No artificial sweeteners or flavorings may be added to cannabis flower or cannabis oils.<sup>5</sup> (Note: cannabis flower and oils may be heated and the resultant smoke or vapor is inhaled. The ban on non-cannabis flavors ensures that candy, food, or fruit-flavored vaporizer cartridges that appeal to children cannot be sold by Vermont cannabis retailers.)
- Cannabis products sold in retail stores may not exceed 60% THC content.<sup>5</sup>
- All cannabis products must be sold inside opaque, child-resistant packaging. Child-resistant packaging must be resistant to children aged 5 or younger.<sup>5</sup>
- Packaging may not contain images that may be appealing to people under the age of 21 (for example, images of cartoon characters, food, candy, or fruit.)<sup>5</sup> See Proposed Rule 2 for details.
- Labels must list the amount of THC and other cannabinoids contained in the product.<sup>5</sup>
- Products sold in packages that contain multiple servings of a product must be labeled with the words "INCLUDES MULTIPLE SERVINGS."<sup>5</sup>

These warning labels will be present on all retail cannabis packaging:<sup>5</sup>

Warning label:

*This is a cannabis product and has not been analyzed or approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). For use by individuals 21 years of age and older or registered qualifying patient only. **KEEP THIS PRODUCT AWAY FROM CHILDREN AND PETS. DO NOT USE IF PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING.** Possession or use of this product may carry significant legal penalties in some jurisdictions and under federal law. It may not be transported outside of the state of Vermont. **The effects of edible cannabis may be delayed by two hours or more.** Cannabis may be habit forming and can impair concentration, coordination, and judgment. Persons 25 years and younger may be more likely to experience harm to the developing brain. It is against the law to drive or operate machinery when under the influence of this product. National Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222.*

Image description: a black outline of a rectangle containing black text on a white background. Text reads: “This is a cannabis product and has not been analyzed or approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). For use by individuals 21 years of age and older or registered qualifying patients only. **KEEP THIS PRODUCT AWAY FROM CHILDREN AND PETS. DO NOT USE IF PREGNANT OR BREASTFEEDING.** Possession or use of this product may carry significant legal penalties in some jurisdictions and under federal law. It may not be transported outside of the state of Vermont. The effects of edible cannabis may be delayed by two hours or more. Cannabis may be habit forming and can impair concentration, coordination, and judgment. Persons 25 years and younger may be more likely to experience harm to the developing brain. It is against the law to drive or operate machinery when under the influence of this product. National Poison Control Center 1-800-222-1222.” End image description.

Warning symbols:



Image description: two warning symbols that will be placed on all retail cannabis packaging in the state of Vermont. On the left is a red outline of a triangle with a white center. There is a black shape of a cannabis leaf in the center of the triangle. The text under the triangle reads “CONTAINS THC” in capital letters. The symbol on the right is a red outline of an octagon with a white center. The text in the center of the red octagon reads “NOT SAFE FOR KIDS” in capital

letters. There is a black line above and below the text in the center of the octagon. End image description.

You can read a full list of proposed rules and regulations on the sale of cannabis in Vermont [here](#).<sup>9</sup>

How does a municipality regulate cannabis sales within its own borders?

- A municipality may create a local Cannabis Control Board (CCB) to regulate how cannabis is sold within the municipality. If no local Cannabis Control Board is created, regulatory power defaults to the state Cannabis Control Board.<sup>8,10</sup>
- Among other capabilities, a local Cannabis Control Board has the power to:<sup>8</sup>
  - regulate the location of cannabis retail stores within a municipality.
  - regulate the number of cannabis retail stores within a municipality.
  - decide whether to increase the “buffer zone” between cannabis retail stores and schools from the state minimum of 500 feet through zoning regulation.
  - issue cannabis dispensary licenses, cultivator licenses, and manufacturer licenses.
- A local Cannabis Control Board cannot:<sup>8</sup>
  - ban cannabis retail locations from a municipality that has already voted to allow cannabis retail stores within its borders by changing zoning regulations in a way that effectively excludes cannabis retail stores.
  - collect extra taxes on top of the 14% state cannabis excise tax.<sup>11,12</sup>

Timeline for retail cannabis store opening:<sup>8</sup>

- March 1, 2022: Town of Hartford vote on whether to allow retail cannabis stores to open within the Town
- September 1, 2022: retailer license applications must begin to be accepted on or before September 1, 2022
- October 1, 2022: CCB will begin issuing retailer licenses, retail sale of cannabis to people 21 or over will be allowed

What does the timeline mean for voters?

- If voters in the Town of Hartford pass the ballot measure to allow cannabis retail stores, a local Hartford Cannabis Control Board must be established very soon after to start creating meaningful local regulations. Without a local CCB, decisions on cannabis retail store policy will be made by the state CCB.<sup>8</sup>

What is left to be determined?

- Up to \$10 million per year of cannabis excise tax revenue will be made available to fund substance misuse prevention programs in Vermont.<sup>13</sup> There is currently no legislative framework for distributing that funding. The Vermont Department of Health is expected to work with State legislators to develop the framework for distributing substance misuse prevention funds.
- Community members who wish to contribute to the work of the State Cannabis Control Board can make a public comment here. Please note that the CCB is only accepting public comments on Proposed Rules 3 and 4 at this time. The CCB is no longer accepting public comments on Proposed Rules 1 and 2.<sup>14</sup>

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2. How can I talk with my kids about cannabis, and what resources can HCC provide to help?

Why do these documents use the word “cannabis” instead of “marijuana”?

- In the early 20th century, the term “marijuana” was used by members of the federal government to create an association between the use of the cannabis plant and minority racial groups in the Southern and Southwestern United States. The federal policy decision to codify the use of the term “marijuana” in the 1937 Marijuana Tax Act was motivated by racism, xenophobia, and prejudice.<sup>1,2</sup> Switching to “cannabis” instead of “marijuana” removes racially coded language from our vocabulary. Additionally, current legislation in the state of Vermont regarding the plant *Cannabis sativa L.* uses the term “cannabis.” Any information related to regulatory efforts in Vermont should also use the term “cannabis” to avoid confusion.

What do parents need to know about the risks of youth cannabis use?

- Talk to your kids about how they are feeling. The American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), American Academy of Child Psychiatry (AACP), and the Children’s Hospital Association (CHA) recently released a statement regarding a national children and adolescent mental health crisis because of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic. According to the AAP, AACP and CHA:

*“The pandemic has struck at the safety and stability of families. More than 140,000 children in the United States lost a primary and/or secondary caregiver, with youth of color disproportionately impacted. We are caring for young people with soaring rates of depression, anxiety, trauma, loneliness, and suicidality that will have lasting impacts on them, their families, and their communities.”<sup>3</sup>*

- If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health issues, HCC has more information about local resources [here](#)<sup>4</sup>
- Talk with your kids about your family’s mental health history, especially if you have a family history of schizophrenia. More research is needed to clarify the links between adolescent cannabis use and long-term mental health impacts. Early cannabis use may accelerate the onset of symptoms of schizophrenia in youth with a family history of schizophrenia.<sup>5</sup> Youth who consistently use higher potency THC products are at higher risk of psychosis\*.<sup>5</sup> Continued cannabis use is associated with poor long-term outcomes for people already experiencing psychosis.<sup>6</sup>
- Do not share your cannabis products with youth under the age of 21. Adolescent cannabis use is associated with higher odds of depression, anxiety, and other mental health issues in the long term.<sup>6</sup> It is illegal to purchase cannabis for anyone under the age of 21 in Vermont.

What can you do to prevent youth cannabis use?



- Store all cannabis products in a locked container out of reach of children. **HCC can provide you with a free lock box you can use to store cannabis products or medications to keep them away from children. Contact HCC Program Coordinator Kelly Clements at [kellyc@hccvt.com](mailto:kellyc@hccvt.com) for more information.**
- Do not use cannabis products around kids. If you smoke or vaporize cannabis, do so outside to avoid exposing youth to cannabis smoke/vapor. If you take edible cannabis products, make sure to store them separately from other food items so kids do not eat them by mistake. Make sure everyone who visits your home understands the rules about not using cannabis in front of young people.<sup>7</sup>
- Set a good example by not driving while intoxicated. Talk to your kids about not accepting rides from drivers who are intoxicated, even if those drivers are their friends.<sup>7</sup>
- Wondering how to go about talking to your kids about their mental health and substance misuse? Check out these resources from ParentUP Vermont<sup>7</sup>: <https://parentupvt.org/> (Recursos en español:<sup>8</sup> <https://drugfree.org/recursos-en-espanol/prevencion-y-accion-temprana/sobre-las-drogas/marihuana/>)
- Helpful facts to frame the discussion of retail cannabis with kids:
  - Frame the decision not to use cannabis in a positive way. In 2019, 27% of Vermont high school students report using cannabis in the past 30 days.<sup>9</sup> To put it another way, 73% of Vermont high school students did not report cannabis use in the past 30 days. The vast majority of high school students did not report current cannabis use in 2019. Highlighting the number of students who do not use cannabis has been shown to empower students who choose not to use cannabis.<sup>10,11</sup> The number of Vermont middle school students who reported past 30 day cannabis use in 2019 was even lower. 93% of middle school students did not use cannabis in the 30 days before the survey, meaning only 7% of middle schoolers did use cannabis.<sup>9</sup> Use these facts in your conversations with your kids. If they say, “Everyone smokes weed,” you can point out that most Vermont students do not use cannabis.
  - What about medical cannabis? Kids are smart. They may point out that cannabis is legal for medical use. The state of Vermont only permits people under the age of 21 to use cannabis products for medical purposes if they have a qualifying healthcare condition such as cancer or severe epilepsy.<sup>12</sup> While there may be medical benefits for youth under 21 who have medical conditions that are not easily treated by other medications, the public health risks of legalizing cannabis use for everyone under 21 are higher than the medical benefit for a few young patients. Therefore, the state of Vermont only grants exceptions to the rule that you must be 21 or older to use cannabis in Vermont rather than allowing anyone under 21 to use cannabis.
  - Contrary to popular belief, cannabis can cause addiction. Approximately 9% of people who use cannabis may become addicted to it.<sup>5</sup>
- Become certified in [Youth Mental Health First Aid!](#) Contact Program Manager Kelly Clements at [kellyc@hccvt.org](mailto:kellyc@hccvt.org) for details.<sup>13</sup>

\*What is psychosis? Psychosis is a mental condition in which a person becomes disconnected from reality. Symptoms of psychosis may include delusions (false beliefs), hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there), and incoherent speech. People experiencing psychosis may also exhibit symptoms of depression, anxiety, sleep disruption, and social withdrawal. For more information, see “Understanding Psychosis” by the National Institute for Mental Health.<sup>14</sup>

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### 3. What do adults aged 21 or over need to know about retail cannabis and safer cannabis use?

Why do these documents use the word “cannabis” instead of “marijuana”?

- In the early 20th century, the term “marijuana” was used by members of the federal government to create an association between the use of the cannabis plant and minority racial groups in the Southern and Southwestern United States. The federal policy decision to codify the use of the term “marijuana” in the 1937 Marijuana Tax Act was motivated by racism, xenophobia, and prejudice.<sup>1,2</sup> Switching to “cannabis” instead of “marijuana” removes racially coded language from our vocabulary. Additionally, current legislation in the state of Vermont regarding the plant *Cannabis sativa L.* uses the term “cannabis.” Any information related to regulatory efforts in Vermont should also use the term “cannabis” to avoid confusion.

What do adults need to know about cannabis?

Regardless of whether the local Town of Hartford ballot measure passes, 2022 will be the year that cannabis becomes more widely available as a retail product to adults aged 21 or over in Vermont.<sup>3</sup> There are some key facts you need to know about cannabis to protect your health and the health of youth in your community. The following information is intended to inform you of the risks of consuming cannabis products that contain THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), the class of chemicals that causes the feelings of “high” or intoxication.<sup>4</sup> CBD, or cannabidiol, does not cause feelings of “high” or intoxication.<sup>4</sup> Providing information on ways to reduce the risks associated with cannabis use is not an endorsement of the use of cannabis by the Hartford Community Coalition.

- Cannabis can cause addiction. Approximately 9% of people who use cannabis may become addicted to it.<sup>4</sup> You can reduce your risk of addiction by abstaining from cannabis use, by using cannabis infrequently (not every day), and by consulting a mental health professional if you feel you are using cannabis to cope with stress. The Hartford Community Coalition website has links to local community resources if you or someone you know is struggling with addiction.<sup>5</sup> Click [here](#) to learn more.
- Cannabis use can exacerbate symptoms of psychosis.\* The risk of psychosis increases with the amount and frequency of THC consumption.<sup>4,6</sup> The risk of psychosis is higher among people with a family history of schizophrenia or other schizotypal mental health disorders.<sup>4,5</sup> People with a personal or family history of psychosis should consider abstaining from cannabis products that contain THC altogether.
- THC impairs your ability to drive or operate heavy machinery. You should wait at least 4 hours after smoking or vaporizing cannabis products containing THC before driving. You should wait at least 8 hours to drive after eating an edible form of THC, like a gummy or brownie. The intoxicating effects of edible cannabis take longer to wear off.<sup>7,8</sup>

- Please note that the 4 hours for inhaled cannabis/8 hours for edible cannabis time frames are general guidelines, not hard-and-fast rules. You should not drive if you still feel like you are intoxicated, regardless of how much time has passed since you last consumed cannabis.
- Cannabis sold now is stronger than the cannabis that was produced 20 years ago.<sup>8</sup> If you try cannabis products, take the smallest dose possible to start with. A low dose could be as little as 1 milligram (mg) to 5mg of an edible THC product or one inhalation from a vaporized cannabis oil product. The effects of edible cannabis products can be delayed by up to 2 hours after ingestion. Do not take more edible cannabis products after your first dose until you have waited at least 2 hours for your first dose to take effect.<sup>6,7</sup>
- THC can cause anxiety. Taking CBD can help reduce anxiety associated with taking THC.<sup>8,9</sup> It can be useful to have a cannabis product that only contains CBD on hand to help counteract the effects of THC in case you experience anxiety after consuming THC.
- Do not combine cannabis with other psychoactive substances such as alcohol, caffeine, or nicotine.
- Cannabis products, including products that only contain CBD, can interact with prescription medications.<sup>9</sup> Talk to your doctor or primary care provider if you take any medications before trying cannabis products.
- Keep all cannabis products away from children and young adults under the age of 21. It is illegal to give retail cannabis products to people under the age of 21 in Vermont.<sup>10</sup> Using cannabis at an early age is associated with negative mental health outcomes including increased risk of developing psychosis, depression, cannabis use disorder, and other mental health conditions.<sup>4,6,9</sup> **HCC can provide you with a free lock box you can use to store cannabis products or medications to keep them away from children. Contact HCC Program Coordinator Kelly Clements at [kellyc@hccvt.com](mailto:kellyc@hccvt.com) for more information.**
- You should not use retail cannabis products to address sleep concerns. There is mixed evidence on whether healthy people with no underlying medical conditions may benefit from cannabis as a sleep aid. Studies suggest that cannabis use can harm sleep quality in otherwise healthy people.<sup>11</sup> Some medical cannabis preparations have been studied for use as sleep aids for patients with post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), chronic pain, and other medical conditions.<sup>12</sup> Talk to a doctor or other medical professional if you are considering using cannabis to address medical needs like pain control or poor sleep quality.
- Do not use cannabis if you are pregnant or breastfeeding. Cannabis may have negative impacts on the developing fetus and may cause harm to breastfeeding infants. More research is needed to establish whether cannabis is safe to use during pregnancy at any dose.<sup>13</sup>

\*What is psychosis? Psychosis is a mental condition in which a person becomes disconnected from reality. Symptoms of psychosis may include delusions (false beliefs), hallucinations (seeing or hearing things that are not there), and incoherent speech. People experiencing psychosis

may also exhibit symptoms of depression, anxiety, sleep disruption, and social withdrawal. For more information, see “Understanding Psychosis” by the National Institute for Mental Health.<sup>14</sup>

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