Cannabis, Health, and the Law in the US

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Together, we can change the course of the HIV epidemic...one woman at a time.

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What is Cannabis?

• Cannabis has medicinal properties
  — Can help people living with HIV
• Family of plants
  — Consumed (marijuana) or used to make fabrics (hemp)
• Cannabis laws and enforcement vary globally
• US: state law
• Drug laws used disparately on communities of color
  — Decriminalizing cannabis can repair disparities
• See also: Cannabis, HIV, and Your Health
Medical vs. Recreational Marijuana

• Medical marijuana
  — Same substances as recreational marijuana

• State regulations
  — Medical marijuana conditions

• Tell provider about everything you take!
  — Medical confidentiality laws protect you

• Medical conditions:
  — ALS
  — Anorexia
  — Cancer
  — Crohn's disease
  — Epilepsy and seizures
  — Fibromyalgia
  — Glaucoma
  — HIV
  — Migraines
  — MS and muscle spasms
  — Pain (chronic)
  — Parkinson's disease

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US Federal Law

- Still illegal under federal law
- 2013 Department of Justice memo
  - Won’t challenge state marijuana laws
  - But: overturned in 2018
- 2022 Biden proclamation
  - Acknowledges harms from marijuana criminalization
  - Directs agencies to review possible decriminalization
  - Advises states to pardon people convicted of minor marijuana offenses
US State Laws

• Decriminalization
  – No arrests or criminal charges for small amounts

• Legalization
  – No penalties for possession
  – May only legalize medical marijuana
    • Need doctor’s prescription

• State regulations on cultivation and sale
  – Usually licensing system

• Medical Marijuana Project map of state laws
Implementation of Legalization Laws

- Legalization ≠ Legal availability
- Licensing system may not be set up
  - New York State
  - Washington, D.C.
- Local police may still arrest people after legalization
  - Selective enforcement disproportionately affecting communities of color
There May Still Be Problems

- Transporting cannabis across state borders
  - Governed by federal law
  - Be careful of airports, train stations
    - TSA says they no longer train dogs to detect cannabis

- Driving under the influence laws (DUI)
  - Don’t consume cannabis and drive impaired!

- Different state laws on marijuana specifics
  - Amount you can possess
  - Whether you can grow your own
    - Public housing is federal!

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• To learn more about this topic, please read the full fact sheet:
  – Cannabis, Health, and the Law in the US

• For more fact sheets and to connect to our community of women living with HIV, visit:
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