**STATE OF WASHINGTON**
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL AND HEALTH SERVICES
Home and Community Living Administration
Residential Care Services • P.O. Box 45600 • Olympia, Washington 98504

June 25, 2026

**HCLA: ALF #2026-026**
**Cannabis Guidance for Assisted Living Facilities**

Dear Assisted Living Facility Administrator:

Washington State Residential Care Services (RCS) is reissuing its standing 2015 cannabis guidance for Assisted Living Facilities (ALF) because the original publication has passed its administrative retention period.

In the past, providers have expressed confusion about cannabis products, also known as marijuana, because the state and federal laws around its use are conflicting. How these laws affect the residents in your home can be even more confusing.

The use of medical and recreational cannabis is still illegal under federal regulation. Consequently, federal funds such as Medicaid, cannot be used directly or indirectly for activities or expenses related to the use of cannabis.

Since RCS receives federal funding, we are unable to issue regulatory guidance specific to cannabis use. RCS does recognize that more and more residents are accessing cannabis through dispensaries and are frequently using it to treat the symptoms of disease. The Department of Health (DOH) provides all state residents guidance around the use of cannabis for both medicinal and recreational purposes.

At this time, RCS will not cite facilities for allowing residents to use cannabis as long as providers are ensuring residents are safe and they have clear policies in place, so staff and residents know what is expected.

RCS encourages providers to develop their policies on cannabis even if it is not a current issue in their home(s). Doing so will ensure current and new residents are aware of the policy. When developing policies and procedures around cannabis use, please consider the following points:

- Residents who wish to use cannabis in smoked form need to be assessed in a manner similar to tobacco use. Please refer to applicable chapters of WAC regarding resident safety and smoking.
- Cannabis, like any other substance that can be harmful, must be kept out of the reach of residents who might endanger themselves with it. Please refer to the applicable WAC sections that address the storage of medication and chemicals.
- Keep in mind that a person under the influence of cannabis may require additional supervision.

- If a person is using cannabis products, the details of how the person receives it, uses it and is supervised, must be documented in their Negotiated Service Agreement.

RCS notes that state and federal laws and rules surrounding both medical and recreational cannabis are changing rapidly; therefore, information in this document must be supplemented with consideration of current rule, law, and code. Providers and settings are responsible for keeping abreast of new developments in this area. To follow the latest development on cannabis laws as they apply to both medicinal and recreational use, please refer to the Department of Health Website at: www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Cannabis.

As always, thank you for the care you provide to the vulnerable adults in your community. If you have any questions, please contact your field manager or the Policy Unit at rcspolicy@dshs.wa.gov.

Sincerely,

Amy Abbott, Director
Residential Care Services

DSHS: *"Partnering with People"*

Related References: DOH: http://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Marijuana