

New Jersey's Department of Health Announces Plan to Expand Its Medicinal Marijuana Program

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On Monday, May 4, 2019, the New Jersey Department of Health announced its intention to seek new applicants to operate up to 108 additional Alternative Treatment Centers (ATCs) to expand access to the state's medicinal marijuana program. The Department stated that "due to the growing patient population served by the Medicinal Marijuana Program over the course of 2018 and 2019, additional ATCs are necessary to meet the needs of the population of qualified patients."

Applicants will have the opportunity to apply for a cultivation license, manufacturing license and dispensary license. The Department will seek up to 24 cultivation endorsements, 30 manufacturing endorsements and 54 dispensary endorsements. According to the Department, 38 licenses will be available in the northern region, 38 in the central region and 32 in the southern region. These numbers are based on the Department's assessment of the market.

Commissioner Dr. Shereef Elnahal stated, "We are at a point where patients just cannot wait any longer for easily accessible, affordable therapy. This request for applications allows for specialization of businesses to increase [availability of] medical product in our state. In addition, by allowing for three sizes of cultivation endorsements (5,000 square feet, 20,000 square feet and 30,000 square feet), we are increasing opportunities for small and medium-sized businesses to participate in the program."

On July 1, 2019, the Department will make the applications available to the public on its website with a submission deadline set for August 15, 2019. Applicants will have until July 5, 2019, to submit written questions regarding the application process, and on July 16, 2019, a pre-application webinar will be held to review the application process and answer the most frequently asked questions previously submitted. Following the webinar, the Department will post these questions and their answers on its website.

Last month, the Department announced it had revised the state's medicinal marijuana program to expand its availability to more patients. The revised program will extend its reach by reducing patient costs and adding more than two dozen diseases and symptoms as qualifying conditions for treatment. New debilitating conditions such as anxiety, migraines, Tourette's syndrome and chronic pain related to musculoskeletal disorders are included in the revised program. Doctors also are allowed to partake in the program without being forced to publicly disclose their participation. New

Jersey currently has 12 licensees.

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