

Policy Profile

-Submitted by Hanni Raley, Assistant Executive Director-

It is down to the wire in the 72nd Regular Session of the Colorado General Assembly with less than a month left in the session. Bills continue to be introduced, and bills that have passed through both chambers are landing on Governor Polis' desk for his action. We are happy to report that a bill The Arc of Aurora has been in support of has been signed and is now a law that you can begin utilizing TODAY!

[HB19-1028](#) added autism spectrum disorder as a qualifying medical condition for medical marijuana use. Prior to the passage of this law, a child under 18 years of age who wanted to be added to the medical marijuana registry for a disabling medical condition had to be diagnosed as having a disabling medical condition by two physicians, one of whom had to be a board-certified pediatrician, a board-certified family physician, or a board-certified child and adolescent psychiatrist who would attest that s/he is part of the patient's primary care provider team.

This newly-passed law removes the requirement regarding specific physicians' involvement, thereby aligning with the constitutional provisions for a debilitating medical condition. The law now states that if the recommending physician is not the patient's primary care physician, s/he shall review the records of a diagnosing physician or a licensed mental health provider acting within his/her scope of practice. This clarification will provide greater access to families with children seeking medical cannabis as a complement to a child's current health regimen. The law also encourages the state board of health, when awarding marijuana study grants, to prioritize grants that gather objective scientific research regarding the efficacy and the safety of administering medical marijuana for pediatric conditions, including but not limited to autism spectrum disorder.

If you think your child may qualify for this alternative treatment option, you will first need a recommendation from two doctors to begin the process of seeking a medical card for the purchase and use of medical marijuana. While your current physician(s) may be willing to write or review your needs for a recommendation, be prepared that some may not, depending on their own practice policies and/or approach to alternative treatment. While likely not covered by your insurance, specialty clinics such as [Holos Health](#), [Cohen Medical Centers](#), or [Vibrant Health Clinic](#) can provide both support through the process and evaluation for a recommendation.

For your appointment with the recommending physician, you will be requested to bring medical records indicating your child's autism diagnosis, certification from the child's other biological parent (or legal documents clarifying your guardianship), your Colorado ID, and your child's birth certificate. If you are unsure of what you need or need clarification, be sure to ask the office where you make your appointment for a recommending physician ahead of time to avoid delays. During the appointment, you should be prepared to talk about what concerns you have for your child as well as your short and long-term health goals for him/her.

Your physician will review the documentation you have brought and take that into consideration regarding a recommendation. While your physician might recommend medical marijuana and/or specific products or routes of delivery, per Federal regulation, s/he will not be able to provide a standard prescription. Once you gain approval for medical marijuana, you will need to ensure you receive a formal card through [Colorado Public Health and Environment \(CDPHE\)](#) before you will be able to follow your physician's recommendations and legally purchase at a medical marijuana dispensary.

If you have any questions about this process, contact CDPHE, your physician, [Realm of Caring](#), or [MAMMAS](#) to better understand your options.

Look forward to the next **News You Can Use** for a wrap up on the 2018/19 legislative session, but if you are interested in staying current with real-time public policy issues, sign up for The Arc of Colorado's Take Action Network [here](#).