



# State-By-State Language Allowing Severe Pain

Every one of the 36 medical cannabis states allows individuals to qualify if they suffer from pain. However, the language varies significantly from state to state. Some states grant medical providers the discretion to recommend cannabis for any medical condition, while others allow anyone with chronic or severe pain to qualify. On the other end of the spectrum, vast numbers of pain patients are still left behind due to some states' narrow definitions of what type of pain qualifies. These include requirements that the pain persist for months before qualifying and/or forcing patients to first try other treatments without success.

The below chart includes the state-by-state language for what type of pain qualifies for cannabis, starting with the least restrictive and ending with the most restrictive. In addition, 15 states allow any adult (21 and older) to use cannabis — Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Illinois, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Montana, Nevada, New Jersey, Oregon, South Dakota, Vermont, and Washington.

Language	State(s)
<b>Any condition</b> qualifies if a physician believes cannabis may alleviate it	California, Maine, Oklahoma
<b>“Chronic pain;”</b> and, in Illinois, “medical condition for which an <b>opioid has been or could be prescribed</b> by a physician based on generally accepted standards of care”	New Jersey, Illinois
<b>“Moderate to severe chronic pain”</b>	New Hampshire
“A disease, medical condition, or its treatment that is chronic, debilitating, and produces ... <b>chronic pain</b> ”	Vermont
<b>““Debilitating medical condition’ shall mean ... chronic or debilitating pain” or “pain refractory to appropriate opioid management”</b>	Mississippi
“A chronic or debilitating disease or medical condition or its treatment that produces ... <b>severe, debilitating pain</b> ”	South Dakota
“A chronic or debilitating disease or medical condition, or treatment [for such conditions, which produces] ... <b>severe pain</b> ”	Colorado, Hawaii, Maryland
“A medical condition or treatment for a medical condition that produces ... <b>severe pain</b> ”	Nevada, Oregon
“A chronic or debilitating disease or its treatment that produces ... <b>severe pain</b> ”	Alaska
“Severe chronic or intractable pain of neuropathic origin or <b>severe chronic or intractable pain</b> ”; “intractable pain”	Pennsylvania, Louisiana
“A chronic or debilitating disease or medical condition or its treatment that produces ... <b>severe and chronic pain</b> ”	Arizona, Michigan

<p>“A <b>chronic</b> medical condition that causes <b>severe, persistent</b> pain,” or “A chronic medical condition that is normally treated with a prescription medication that could lead to physical or psychological dependence, when a physician determines that medical use of marijuana could be effective in treating that condition and would serve as a safer alternative to the prescription medication”</p>	Missouri
<p>“A chronic or debilitating disease or medical condition, or its treatment, that produces ... <b>debilitating, chronic pain</b>”</p>	Rhode Island
<p>“Pain that is either... <b>chronic and severe or intractable</b>”</p>	Ohio
<p>“<b>pain lasting longer than two weeks</b> that is not adequately managed, in the qualified medical provider’s opinion, despite treatment attempts using: (i) conventional medications other than opioids or opiates; or (ii) physical interventions”</p>	Utah
<p>A “condition for which <b>an opioid could be prescribed</b>” or “<b>any severe debilitating pain</b> that the practitioner determines <b>degrades health and functional capability; where the patient has contraindications, has experienced intolerable side effects, or has experienced failure of one or more previously tried therapeutic options</b>; and where there is documented medical evidence” of the pain having lasted at least three months or where the practitioner reasonably anticipates it to last at least three months</p>	New York
<p>“<b>Painful peripheral neuropathy</b>” and “<b>severe chronic pain</b>” with objective proof and two physician certifications</p>	New Mexico
<p>“<b>Severe chronic pain</b> that is persistent pain of severe intensity <b>that significantly interferes with daily activities</b> as documented by the patient’s treating physician and by:          (i) Objective proof of the etiology of the pain, including relevant and necessary diagnostic tests that may include but are not limited to the results of an x-ray, computerized tomography scan, or magnetic resonance imaging; or          (ii) Confirmation of that diagnosis from a second physician who is independent of the treating physician and who conducts a physical examination”</p>	Montana
<p><b>Severe, debilitating pain “that has not responded to previously prescribed medication or surgical measures for more than 3 months or for which other treatment options produced serious side effects”</b></p>	Delaware, North Dakota
<p>“<b>Intractable pain ... [which is] unrelieved by standard medical treatments and medications</b>”</p>	Washington
<p>“<b>Severe chronic or intractable pain</b> in which conventional therapeutic intervention and opiate therapy is contraindicated or ineffective”</p>	West Virginia
<p><b>Any debilitating medical condition</b> that the physician believes cannabis may alleviate qualifies if it is “of the same kind or class as or comparable to those enumerated” (which are serious conditions such as HIV/AIDS and cancer)</p>	Florida

<p><b>“Chronic pain of at least 6 months duration associated with a specified underlying chronic condition refractory [resistant to] to other treatment intervention”</b></p>	Connecticut
<p><b>Intractable pain that has not responded to ordinary medical or surgical measures for more than six months</b></p>	Arkansas
<p>A condition causing <b>“intractable pain ... and progressing to such an extent that one or more of a patient’s major life activities is substantially limited”</b></p>	Massachusetts
<p><b>Intractable pain</b>— “a pain state in which the cause of the pain cannot be removed or otherwise treated with the consent of the patient and which, in the generally accepted course of medical practice, no relief or cure of the cause of the pain is possible, or none has been found after reasonable efforts”</p>	Minnesota