

Licenses aside, buying legal marijuana will take time

By: Catherine Sweeney The Journal Record August 31, 2018 0



Christine Glenn sorts marijuana at the Blum marijuana dispensary in Las Vegas. (AP photo/John Locher)

OKLAHOMA CITY – More than 800 Oklahomans can now legally possess marijuana, but buying it is another story.

The Oklahoma Medical Marijuana Authority opened license applications a week ago Saturday. Since that time, it has accepted more than 2,000 individual submissions and about 1,000 for businesses, which include dispensaries, processors and growers.

As of Friday, the authority issued 844 patient licenses, said Tony Sellars, the Oklahoma State Department of Health spokesman. That agency oversees the authority. Each patient license holder can possess up to 3 ounces of dried smokable marijuana on their person and up to 8 ounces of that in their residence. They can also possess up to 72 ounces of edible products and 1 ounce of concentrated marijuana in their residences.

The authority has mailed 43 business licenses, Sellars said. That commercial license figure includes those for dispensaries, processors and growers. The retailers might have their licenses, but that doesn't necessarily mean that they have marijuana on hand to sell.

Chip Paul is the chairman of Oklahomans for Health, the organization that wrote State Question 788 and campaigned for its placement on the ballot. He said that because of federal regulations and state law, all dispensary products must be grown and processed locally. He also said that it takes a marijuana plant about eight weeks to grow from seed to maturity. That would mean that if an operation waited until it got its license to begin growing, its products wouldn't hit the shelves until late fall.

"If a dispensary opens with product before mid-November, that's bad form," he said. "It's wrong, and they've violated the law. We have cards and all of that, but really it's going to take another eight weeks to have a functioning ecosystem."

Sarah Lee Gossett Parrish is a member of the Oklahoma Cannabis Trade Association*. She said that even eight weeks is a generous estimation. The growers have to get licensed and then begin growing. But once that plant is harvested, she said, the grower will have to take the product to a processor, who will have to sell it to dispensaries.

"I don't think people realize that lag time is there," she said.

Paul said that despite this hiccup, the current legal situation regarding marijuana is an improvement from what it was before.

"You have people who are medical patients and have been medicating illegally," he said. "Now, at least they have peace of mind that they're proper, right and legal. That's giant for our community."

* Editor's note: This story was updated at 5:24 p.m. Sept. 6 to address an error in Parrish's title.

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