



# Medical Marijuana Guidelines for Practice: Health Policy Implications

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Cannabis use in pediatric health care remains limited, however, there is increasing evidence on the pharmacologic benefits of medical marijuana for chronic conditions in childhood. Realizing the need for guidance in practice, the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) published guidelines to aid in decision making in nursing practice. While focusing primarily on adult use of cannabis, the guidelines do address special populations such as children and adolescents. Recent FDA approval of a cannabis product for pediatric use, NCSBN National Nursing Guidelines for Medical Marijuana, and pediatric implications for nursing practice. *J Pediatr Health Care.* (2019) 34, 722–726

isolated from the cannabis plant in 1964, and then the cannabinoid receptor for THC was identified in 1984. These discoveries led to the understanding that the body has a series of regulatory mechanisms, which comprise the endocannabinoid system (

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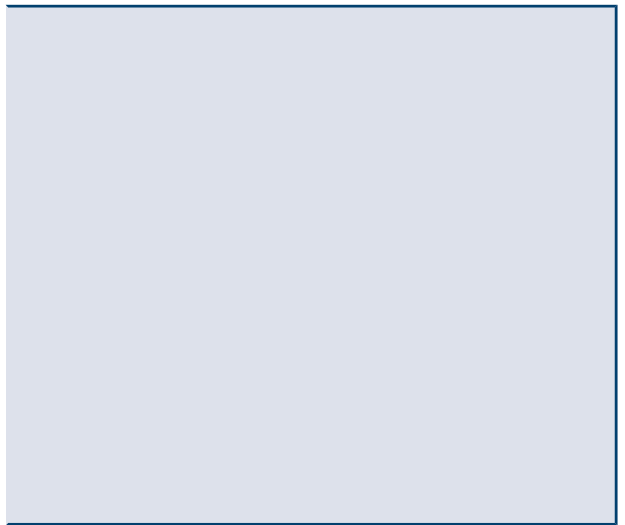
Cannabis use was first documented about 3,000 years ago; tetrahydrocannabinol (THC), a phytocannabinoid, was only

Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and U.S. Virgin Islands have approved comprehensive Medical Marijuana Programs (MMPs), and 12 states allow the use of “low THC, high CBD” products for limited medical purposes or as a legal defense ([National Council of State Legislatures \[NCSL\], 2019](#)). MMPs do not allow providers to prescribe cannabis for medical use, but they do indicate specific qualifying conditions for the use of medical marijuana and allow providers to certify the existence of state qualifying conditions for a specific patient. Three states remain in which no form of cannabis, including CBD, is legal: Idaho, South Dakota, and Nebraska ([Doheny, 2019](#); [State Marijuana Laws in 2019 \[map\], 2019](#)). Restrictions on access to CBD for pediatric seizure treatment caused some parents to relocate their families to states where such use of medical marijuana was legalized ([Talamo, Kelley, & Swyter, 2015](#)).

The recent passage of [The Agriculture Improvement Act \(2018\)](#), known as the Farm Bill, allowed for the cultivation and sale of hemp, which is derived from the plant. Generally, hemp contains less THC and more CBD. Section 10113 of the Farm Bill indicates that for the plant to be considered as hemp, it cannot contain more than 0.3% THC. States and the federal government are required to work together in the licensing and regulation of hemp products. However, the FDA has issued warning letters to firms that market unapproved drugs that allegedly contain CBD ([FDA, 2019](#)).

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Despite the limitations on cannabis research, there is some moderate to high quality evidence available for effective



Following the NCSBN publication of nursing guidelines for medical marijuana, the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) issued a position brief in January 2019 on cannabis and marijuana ([NASN, 2019](#)). The contradiction between federal and state laws has created

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