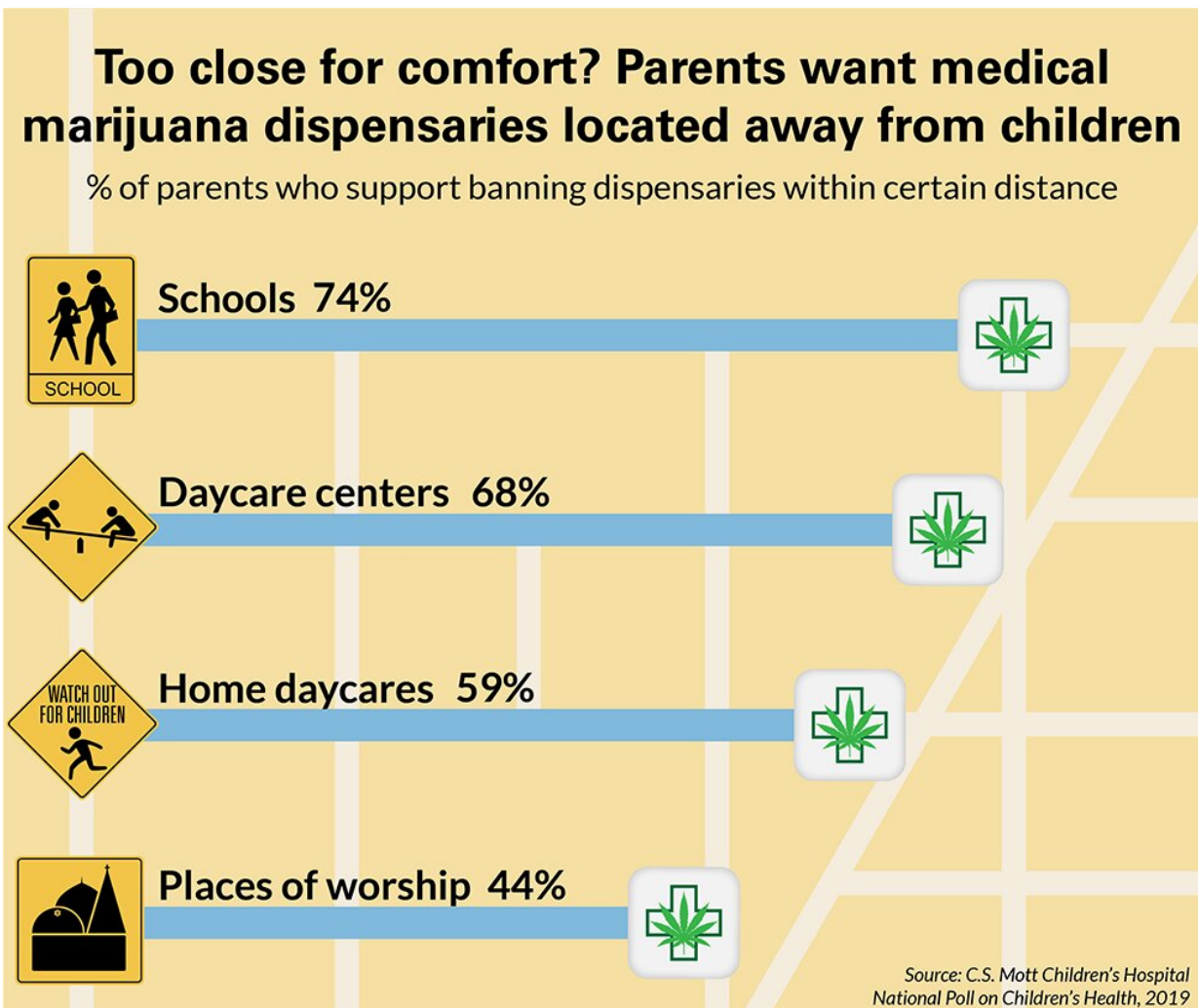


# Parents: Keep medical marijuana dispensaries away from children

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About 3/4 of parents say dispensaries should not be near schools; 1/2 concerned about the risks of people driving while impaired near children's areas. Credit: C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health at the University of Michigan.

With medical marijuana now legal in about two-thirds of U.S. states, there's growing concern about how dispensaries may impact surrounding neighborhoods and communities.

And parents in a new national poll overwhelmingly agree on one place dispensaries should not be allowed: anywhere near children.

Seven in 10 parents think they should have a say in whether dispensaries are located near their child's school or daycare and most say they should be banned within a certain distance of those facilities, according to the C.S. Mott Children's Hospital National Poll on Children's Health at the University of Michigan.

Highest on the list of concerns was the risk impaired drivers may pose to children—with nearly half of parents saying this was a significant worry. A recent study found that more than half of people taking cannabis for chronic pain report driving while high.

"Medical [marijuana](#) has become legal in the majority of states but there is wide variation in state and local policies that regulate the location and operation of dispensaries," says poll co-director Sarah Clark, M.P.H.

"The majority of parents feel strongly that they should give local input on decisions regarding where dispensaries may open and also support limitations on how close dispensaries could be to children's areas."

Aside from the top concern involving drivers under the influence, some parents also worried about the possibility of a child finding and ingesting edible marijuana inadvertently left behind by a dispensary customer (48 percent), and teens having easier opportunities accessing marijuana (49 percent.) Other dispensary concerns included setting a bad example for

kids (45 percent) and bringing violent crime to the area (35 percent).

Three quarters of parents indicated general support for legal medical marijuana, including one third of parents who support the option for children. Just 26 percent of parents opposed medical marijuana.

At the same time, most parents agreed that dispensaries should be banned within a certain distance of elementary schools, middle and high schools, and daycare centers. Forty-four percent of parents also believed dispensaries should not be close to places of worship. Support for such bans was equally strong among both mothers and fathers, younger and older parents, and parents of higher and lower income.

"Most parents seem to understand that marijuana can have legitimate medical benefits, but parents also have major concerns about the risks that [medical marijuana dispensaries](#) might pose to children," Clark says. "When it comes to where dispensaries are located, many parents feel that any area near children is too close for comfort."

Most parents (77 percent) agreed that medical marijuana dispensaries should have the same regulations as liquor stores for where they can be located. Meanwhile, 52 percent of parents said dispensaries should have the same rights as other businesses. Nearly all parents (90 percent) felt dispensaries should undergo inspections to ensure they are following all regulations.

Nearly half of parents (45 percent) said that medical marijuana is legal in their state, and 24 percent knew there was at least one medical marijuana dispensary in their community. Only 20 percent reported that their state or community has regulations about where dispensaries can be located, while 59 percent did not know if such regulations exist.

While most parents wanted to be consulted about locating a dispensary

near their child's school or daycare, this may prove difficult, Clark says. There is no consistent state or local framework to regulate the location and operations of dispensaries. Some states may have added legal complexities differentiating the sale of medical versus recreational marijuana.

It may also be confusing about whether parents need to contact elected officials or commissions, and if they should focus on the state or local level when an application is filed for a new dispensary. Decisions about the location of new dispensaries could be made through a state law, a local zoning regulation, or other action.

"Parents who want to share their views about dispensaries before any open in their school's neighborhood may have limited opportunities to do so. They may not even be aware that a specific dispensary location is under consideration until the decision has already been made," Clark says.

"The lack of established standards may lead officials to enact policies that may not address parents' concerns," Clark adds. "Parents who want to provide input about local dispensaries may need to take the initiative to learn about the rules for opening a dispensary in their community and what steps they should follow to be involved in these decisions."

Provided by University of Michigan

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