

The Need for Emergency Access to Medical Marijuana in New York



Why does New York need an interim, emergency access program for medical marijuana?

- On July 7, 2014, Governor Cuomo signed a law that will establish New York's' first medical marijuana program. The statute allows the Governor to take eighteen months or longer to implement the program.
- The eighteen month (or longer) timeline laid out by Governor Cuomo is simply too long for some patients. Many of the patients with the most dire need for medical marijuana may not survive another eighteen months. Just days after the bill was signed, two young children with severe seizure disorders, who may well have benefited from medical marijuana, from Western New York died.
- Medical marijuana has dramatically reduced the number of seizures in patients from states where medical marijuana is already legal and available. It has also been shown to greatly improve the quality of life for terminal patients and help them tolerate the side effects from critically needed treatments, such as chemotherapy.

What is an emergency access system?

- We understand it will take some time to establish a fully functional medical marijuana system in New York. But for those patients who cannot wait until such a system is established, we are calling on Governor Cuomo to establish a temporary, interim program that would help a small group of patients – those who may not survive the eighteen months it will take for the full implementation of the program.
- Those patients would be allowed legal access to medical cannabis as soon as possible, while the full program is getting up and running.

How would an emergency access program be established?

- There are several different avenues the Governor could pursue to get critically ill patients medical marijuana as soon as possible. Some of these include:
- Fast tracking one or more producers and getting them a license to begin growing medicine as soon as possible.
- Working with GW pharmaceuticals to increase access to Epidiolex, a high CBD form of cannabis that may help some children with severe seizure disorders.
- Working with the federal government to allow the state or individual patients to import medicine from states where medical marijuana is already legal.

How can I help patients in need get emergency access to medical marijuana in New York?

- Call Governor Cuomo at 518-474-8390 and demand that he establish an emergency access program for medical marijuana patients who have life-threatening or terminal illnesses. Ask your friends and family to do the same.
- Call your NYS legislators and urge them to also contact Governor Cuomo to set up a system for expedited access. If you have time, ask for an in-person meeting to discuss why this issue is so important to you. You can find you NYS Senator here: <http://www.nysenate.gov/senators> and your Assemblyman here: <http://assembly.state.ny.us/mem/?sh=search>.
- Contact your US Senators and your representatives and ask them to help New York create a system for emergency access of medical marijuana. You can find their contact information here: <http://www.opencongress.org/people/zipcodelookup>
- Spread the word. Please let your friends and family know about the need for emergency access and encourage them to contact Governor Cuomo's office. Join the campaign on social media using the hashtag #NYCantWait. Follow us on Twitter (@Compassionate NY) and Facebook (Compassionate Care NY).