

Cannabis
Legalization

A GUIDE FOR
LICENSED PRIVATE
RETAIL OUTLETS

Quick summary of cannabis rules as they pertain to non-medical cannabis retail licensees

The [Cannabis Control and Licensing Act \(CCLA\)](#) is the overarching law that governs non-medical cannabis retail sales in BC. In addition, legal cannabis retail is governed by various regulations and policies. B.C.'s laws and regulation related to licensed cannabis retailing are found [here](#). Businesses that have obtained a license to sell non-medical cannabis must follow federal and provincial laws and the terms and conditions of their licenses at all times. Specific questions related to B.C. cannabis legislation or regulation may be directed to cannabisregs@gov.bc.ca.

Cannabis retail stores must:

- Acquire a cannabis retail store licence authorizing the sale of dried cannabis, cannabis oil, edibles, extracts, topical products, cannabis seeds and cannabis accessories for non-medical purposes.
- Purchase non-medical cannabis only from the BC Liquor Distribution Branch (retailers are not permitted to purchase cannabis products directly from a federally licensed producer, other licensed retail store, or any other source)
- Meet security requirements, such as locked retail product display cases and security cameras (security cameras must have an unobstructed view of the retail sales area, product storage area and all entrances/exits), and secure perimeter door locks
- Prevent disturbances near the store

Cannabis retail licensees may:

- Sell non-medical cannabis at their store between the hours of 9 a.m. and 11 p.m., unless their hours are further restricted by local government
- Sell cannabis accessories such as rolling papers or wraps, holders, pipes, water pipes, bongs and vaporizers

For more information see:

- **[Cannabis Retail Store Terms and Conditions: A handbook for the sale of non-medical cannabis in British Columbia](#)**

Cannabis retail licensees must not:

- Sell cannabis products online (online sales are only available through the [BC government online store](#))
- Allow anyone under 19 years of age to be in the store or to purchase cannabis or cannabis accessories (2 pieces of identification are required to confirm age of customers whenever there is any doubt)
- Sell cannabis to persons intoxicated by any substance
- Give customers samples of cannabis
- Allow cannabis use in their store
- Allow self-service by customers (all customers must be assisted by a store employee to purchase products)
- Allow cannabis or cannabis accessories to be visible from outside the store
- Sell, in one transaction, more than 30 grams of cannabis or its equivalent to a patron
- Provide delivery services for non-medical cannabis
- Address or discuss the medical use of cannabis

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Non-medical cannabis is now legal in Canada. This opens up new business opportunities for cannabis retailers. It also provides an opportunity to think about what we want cannabis retailing to look like. What is responsible marketing of cannabis? How can cannabis stores contribute positively to the community? How can they be viable businesses while serving the needs of customers and contributing positively to the broader community alike? This guide provides cannabis retailers with a framework to:

- identify key issues and opportunities
- access information to make informed and thoughtful decisions
- adopt a holistic approach to cannabis and well-being
- address the needs of the broader community

The guide does not tell retail outlets what to do. Nor does it assume that in a legal cannabis market there is a one-size-fits-all approach to cannabis retailing. Cannabis legalization is viewed as a significant change that brings both challenges and opportunities to evolve responsible retailing.

How do you build strong relationships with your customers and community?

Humans have used the cannabis plant for health, social and spiritual reasons for millennia, and this has led to its wide distribution across the globe. Cannabis has long been used as a source of food and fibre (hemp), for ritual and celebration, and for its medicinal properties. Pain relief and an early form of anaesthetic were among its common uses. History also documents the darker side of cannabis. Please see [Drug History Timeline](#) for a more complete and interesting description of the history of cannabis and other drugs.

In the new legalized environment, retail licensees have an opportunity to tap into and build on the long history of human use of cannabis. Selling cannabis may be seen as a service rather than merely selling a product. Here are some tips for retailers who want to support the health and well-being of the people and communities they serve.

Good customer service

Support customers in making informed choices: People choose to use cannabis for many reasons – to feel good, to feel better, to do better or to explore. Most often, these reasons relate to a desire to support well-being, improve social interactions, reduce unpleasant feelings or explore new perspectives. Most people also know that cannabis can lead to problems if not used properly.

Customers need help in identifying the range of cannabis products available and the complexity of factors that influence how cannabis may be experienced. Sales staff can help customers make informed and helpful choices and become aware and reflective of how different cannabis products may affect them.

Staff training might include:

- potency and common effects of various cannabis strains
- initial versus average levels of consumption
- reasons people might be choosing to use cannabis
- issues that may arise from various patterns of use and how to find help

Experience with populations who face stigma for using substances can be a valuable asset for staff. Some people with disabilities, people who use cannabis to cope with social problems such as homelessness or social exclusion and people who inject other drugs have particular needs that might influence their use of cannabis or its impact on their lives. An understanding of these issues can help staff provide a better and more inclusive customer service experience for all customers.

Nurture positive relationships with

customers: Relationships are built on understanding and trust. Taking time to listen to a customer's needs, asking thoughtful questions and providing friendly expertise about the products available are all critical ways to build understanding and trust.

Ways to Nurture Positive Relationships

Life is about relationships. Relationships involve responsibilities. In other words, retail outlets' responsibility is to the laws and regulations and the social relationships those laws and regulations are meant to support. The table highlights some ways to nurture positive relationships with both customers and the community.

	With customers	With the community
Help customers make informed choices	✓	
Take time to understand customer needs	✓	
Avoid pressure sales tactics	✓	
Promote socially-responsible messaging	✓	✓
Provide accurate and balanced information	✓	✓
Promote social responsibility		✓
Be a good employer		✓
Prevent disturbances		✓
Contribute to community life		✓

Good retailing always involves some balance between sales and service. Focus should always be on service, knowing that good service will lead to appropriate sales to those who need or want the product. A focus on sales may lead to pressure on customers to buy products they neither need nor want or to buy more, and use more, than they should to optimize their well-being. A primary focus on service rather than sales builds trust and positive relationships.

Supporting customer knowledge:

You might address common customer questions or concerns like:

- » How do I choose the right strain?
- » Indica vs. Sativa vs. hybrid strains
- » THC and CBD: What is the difference? How do they work together?
- » Precautions, side effects or adverse effects

Be sure to provide accurate information and links to more detailed sources, such as:

- [Here to Help](#)
- [Get Cannabis Clarity](#)
- [BC Cannabis Stores](#)



Promote socially responsible messaging: As is the case with alcohol, licensed private retailers are required to post centrally developed posters or other forms of social responsibility messaging. However, socially responsible messaging is so much more. It is about the language used in communicating with customers in the store and with the community at large. It is also about a retail environment that supports customer well-being, providing fair and balanced information that helps minimize potential risks of cannabis use. Retailers can promote socially responsible messaging (and behaviour) in the way they run their business.

For example, ensuring staff are adequately trained and able to develop, reflect on and implement principles that support customer health and well-being is important. Staff should be prepared to engage customers in dialogue about cannabis, safer use, and potential impacts, whether positive or negative.

Socially responsible messaging:

- encourages us to express and listen to different views around cannabis use
- fosters a safe, inclusive environment that supports individual and collective well-being
- builds caring relationships with customers
- helps customers learn how to manage cannabis and minimize potential risks

Being a business leader

Embrace your role as a leader in the new cannabis landscape: All staff members must understand and adhere to the laws around selling cannabis. Yet there are many new rules and regulations. Retailers have the opportunity to help identify those rules that work well and those that don't. Working within approved guidelines with the community and government regulators to evolve a system that meets the needs of everyone is a huge, but exciting challenge. Together we can respond to community concerns and enhance our collective understanding about cannabis and its potential role in living together well.

Traps to avoid

- **Overstating cannabis benefits:** Humans are way too complex to have one magical formula for health and well-being. Yet, some people sincerely believe cannabis is useful in all situations. Promoting such views can turn customers off and cause you to lose credibility.
- **Understating the risks:** All substance use has risk, even caffeine. Some ways of using are safer than others. Rather than skipping over risks, it's better to let customers know what people might experience if they use too much, too often, or in an unsafe context.
- **Overemphasizing cannabis users' rights:** Legalization means cannabis use need no longer be a hidden activity. That doesn't mean cannabis users should ignore the rights of people around them who don't use and don't want to be around second-hand cannabis smoke. It's important that retailers encourage respectful customer attitudes and behaviours, in the store and in the community.

Be a good employer: Of course, retail outlets should provide employees with adequate training, a safe working environment and fair and equal pay. Yet there is so much more to being a good employer. This includes nurturing a positive working culture. Listening to employees and engaging in collective problem solving and creative solution finding goes a long way toward building such a culture. Developing a shared vision of optimal customer service and community support contributes to an exciting and healthy workplace.

Build positive relationships with the community: Licensed private cannabis retailers have an obligation to make sure their outlet is not a source of disturbances nearby, but building a positive relationship with the community goes beyond keeping the peace. It can start with reaching out to and getting to know nearby business owners and staff, openly engaging them in conversation and proactively responding to their questions and concerns. Getting involved in the community and supporting local initiatives is also an important way to demonstrate a real desire to contribute to the community. Providing balanced information and actively promoting social responsibility will build trust among all those involved.

Stores selling products like cannabis, where there is controversy, may initially face hostility from some community members. Engaging in meaningful dialogue with people opposed to the presence of cannabis stores can be a first step in developing a view of licensed private cannabis retailers as responsive community partners. Partnering with a local university, college or other respected community group to help facilitate the dialogue may be useful.

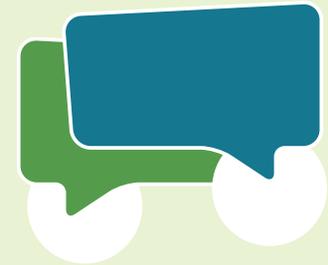
For Dialogue
resources see
[Let's Talk Cannabis](#)

Dialogue: a tool for business development

Dialogue is a conversation in which two or more people seek to understand each other. While talking is a part of the conversation, listening and asking good questions are the more important skills. The goal is not to come away having convinced someone about something but to have gained understanding of another's perspective.

Dialogue is an important tool, especially as we enter an era of legalized cannabis. People have different perspectives on cannabis. We do not need to think and believe alike in order to get along. However, we do need to live together. That requires that we understand each other and that we respect the needs and rights of others.

Open dialogue with all stakeholders – employees, customers, community members, local businesses, local organizations and others – can help create a broad understanding of the views within our community. This understanding provides a critical foundation from which to develop shared approaches that respect everyone. Dialogue also helps participants develop the skills for the civil exchange of ideas so needed in democratic communities. In dialogue, we discover new ideas that allow us to evolve our thinking and become lifelong learners.



Summary

In the new legal market, licensed private cannabis retail outlets have an opportunity to build relationships and have a positive impact with customers, staff, other businesses, and the broader community. Making cannabis legal gives retail licensees an opportunity to enhance customers' well-being (and minimize risks) by providing quality products and an environment in which users are educated, listened to and supported.

Retailers serve a range of customers whose needs may differ though some challenges are common.

- Someone who uses cannabis to relax after work may benefit from a different product or pattern of use than someone who is managing chronic mental or physical health challenges. Attending to goals for use can aid in providing the best fit.
- Many cannabis-related problems are associated with underage, heavy, frequent or long-term use. Consuming edibles or teas too quickly



can result in over intoxication and unpleasant effects. Advising caution and moderation helps make such outcomes less likely.

- Using cannabis may help people relax and connect with others socially. Cannabis may also be used to “step away” for a time. Too much of either can be a problem. Encouraging balance supports customer well-being.

Legalization also provides an opportunity to engage key stakeholders, promote dialogue, and contribute to building healthy communities. Cannabis retailers who build community credibility may become reliable sources of information, support, and leadership in the community when it comes to cannabis use.

Notes:

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