



WARNING FOR IMMIGRANTS on MEDICAL AND LEGALIZED MARIJUANA

The Problem

- 28 states¹ and the District of Columbia have legalized medical marijuana. Eight states² and the District of Columbia have legalized recreational marijuana for adults.
- Immigrants may reasonably think that using marijuana according to these state laws will not hurt their immigration status. Unfortunately, that's wrong!! It is still a federal offense to possess marijuana, and federal law controls for immigration.
- ***If a non-citizen admits to an immigration official that he or she has ever used marijuana***, the person can face very serious immigration problems – if he or she applies for a green card, applies for U.S. citizenship, travels outside the U.S., or ICE just questions them on the street. This is true even if the person never was convicted of a crime, just used marijuana at home, and it was legal under state law.
- More and more, immigration officers are asking noncitizens if they have ever used marijuana—*especially* in states that have legalized marijuana.

What to do: Legal Self-Defense for Noncitizens

- Don't use marijuana until you are a U.S. citizen. Don't work in a marijuana shop.
- If you have a real medical need and there is no good substitute for medical marijuana, get legal counsel.
- Never leave the house carrying marijuana, a medical marijuana card, paraphernalia (like a pipe), or accessories like marijuana T-shirts or stickers. Don't have photos or text about you and marijuana on your phone, Facebook, or anywhere else.
- Most important, ***never admit to any immigration or border official that you ever have used or possessed marijuana***, unless you have expert legal advice that this is OK. If a federal official asks you about marijuana, say that you don't want to talk to them and you want to speak to a lawyer. You have the right to remain silent. Stay strong – once you admit it, you can't take it back. If you did admit this to a federal officer, get legal help quickly.

¹ Medical marijuana is legal in Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, California, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Florida, Hawaii, Illinois, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, Montana, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Dakota, Ohio, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, And Washington.

² Recreational marijuana is legal for adults in Alaska, California, Colorado, Massachusetts, Nevada, Oregon, and Washington, and soon will be in Maine.