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Ohio Expands Access to Medical Marijuana Dispensary Licenses

On April 19, 2021, the State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy approved increasing the number of medical marijuana dispensary licenses in the state by 73. If all 73 licenses are awarded, this will bring the total number of dispensary licenses to 130. There are currently 57 operational medical marijuana dispensaries.

However, obtaining a new license will not only involve skill in preparing a competitive application, but it will also involve a substantial amount of luck. Under the new framework, applicants will be awarded a license through a lottery process in each district. Our firm has helped successful applicants prepare and submit their medical marijuana applications in the past and is ready to do the same for new applicants in this process.

The new licenses will be awarded using an application process the State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy is calling “RFA II,” which is expected to be announced in the spring/summer of 2021. The timing of this announcement will be determined when the Board’s pending rule changes regarding the application process are made final. This [presentation](#) shows maps of the current and proposed districts and the number of dispensary licenses per district. It also explains the process the State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy used when reaching its decisions regarding the new medical marijuana dispensary licenses. Further, this document contains [Frequently Asked Questions](#) about RFA II.

As with previous applications, RFA II will require applicants to specify the district(s) wherein they are applying for a license, and provisional dispensary licenses will be awarded based on those districts. The districts will remain the same as in the previous RFA. Dispensary applications will be evaluated to determine who is a qualified applicant.

All viable applications will then be entered into a lottery system, wherein individual lotteries will be held for each dispensary district with available licenses. The State of Ohio Board of Pharmacy believes the lottery system for qualified applicants will result in a

fairer, more streamlined system due to the Board's consideration of objective, rather than subjective, criteria.

Ohio currently has 31 medical marijuana dispensary districts. While the districts will not be changing for the RFA II process, certain districts will see a significant increase in the number of medical marijuana dispensaries. For example, Hamilton County will see an increase from 3 to 11, Franklin County will see an increase from 6 to 15, and Cuyahoga will see an increase from 5 to 12.

The new RFA II rules do not change the number of dispensary licenses a current medical marijuana dispensary owner may possess. That number remains at five. Still, those with under five current licenses may consider trying to obtain additional licenses to grab more market share in a growing industry.

More information on RFA II will be posted to the Ohio Medical Marijuana Control Program website (www.medicalmarijuana.ohio.gov) when the application process is announced in the spring/summer of 2021.

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