

Task Force on Medical Cannabis Therapeutic Research Meeting minutes

DATE: FRIDAY, MARCH 18, 2022 (3:00PM-5:00PM)

MINUTES PREPARED BY: KIMBERLY VICARS

LOCATION: VIRTUAL (WEBEX)

Attendance:

Members

- Sen. Mark Koran (Co-Chair)
- Rep. Heather Edelson (Co-Chair)
- Rep. Nolan West
- Tara Holt
- Maren Schroeder
- Erin Chase
- Jessica Hauser
- Tara Holt, representing Comm. Jodi Harpstead
- Ann Hoekstra, PharmD
- Charles Reznikoff, MD
- Charles Hilger Jr., MSW, LADC
- Bruce Bostrom
- Janet Reiter

Guests

- Chris Tholkes, MDH
- Amber Shimpa, Vireo Health
- Stephen Dahmer, MD, Vireo Health
- Dina Rollman, Green Thumb Indus.
- Rachel Loeber, Leafline Labs
- Chair Michael Fairbanks, White Earth Nation
- Leonard Fineday, White Earth Nation
- Bill Haas, White Earth Nation
- Chair Darrell Seki, Red Lake Nation
- Joe Plumer, Red Lake Nation
- Sam Strong, Red Lake Nation
- Cody Bauleke, MDH

Excused

- Comm. John Harrington
- Mary Gilbert, RN
- Katie Kennedy
- John Swenson

- Dean Gilbertson
- Chris Caulk
- Gwen Verchota, PhD, CNP
- Brian Peters
- Comm. Jan Malcolm
- Sen. Melisa Lopez Franzen

Agenda

- Welcome and introductions by Co-Chair Sen. Mark Koran
- Member Maren Schroeder moved approval of minutes from Jan 14, 2022, Dr. Reznikoff seconded, and Motion prevailed
- Update on smokable medical cannabis rollout was given by Chris Tholkes, Dir, Office of Medical Cannabis:
 - OMC made program preparations to adapt to higher demand anticipated by addition of dried raw cannabis to program offerings on or around March 1: added temp staff to call center, added dried raw cannabis-specific FAQ to web site, prepared media release and GovDelivery blast, permitted manufacturers to begin pharmacist consults Feb 1.
 - Since March 1, call volume, web traffic and program application rates have increased.
 - Program application volume has gone from 60/day to 150/day, while application processing times have remained relatively steady (pre-dried raw, 2-5 days, post-dried raw, 5 days, or a little over), though statute allows up to 30 days for processing of completed applications.
 - Caregiver background checks have doubled.
 - In the first week of March, dispensary visits have doubled at Leafline and tripled at Vireo over the first week in February, and overall, product sales have doubled.
- Update on Manufacturer Ownership Changes and Management Structures
 - Amber Shimpa, Vireo COO and Stephen Dahmer, Vireo CMO gave updates on Vireo Health
 - Deal will close within next 6 months or so. Dr. Kyle Kingsley will continue to be lead contact, no local leadership changes expected, including that of General Manager, and Director of Retail, both Minnesota residents.
 - Dina Rollman, Leafline (LLL)/Green Thumb Industries Gov't Relations Director, Rachel Loeber, Leafline Chief Science Officer (CSO)
 - Acquisition was completed 12/29/2021. Rachel Loeber, CSO, is primary MN contact; Dina Rollman will be the corporate headquarters contact; Sarah Nielsen is Dir of Retail Operations; Robin Johnson and Sarah Lynch will be running day-to-day operations.

- MN workforce will be expanding due to increase in capacity to do facility and operational improvements. GreenThumb will be providing resources to MN Leafline, but MN team will continue to lead the MN operations.
- Members had several questions for the manufacturers concerning dried raw cannabis:
 - Product availability – expected to increase as pent-up demand evens out and more products become available; there have also been delays in product availability due to limited lab capacity, given the time constraints required by some of the tests.
 - Vireo – currently providing 30 raw cannabis product types across 12 strains
 - LLL - Raw cannabis rollout – all locations are offering flower products – 14 diff offerings, 10 in jars, 4 pre-rolls, primarily high THC, one Mixed THC and CBD
 - Cross-manufacturer sales have begun and are expected to increase to better ensure adequate supplies at all locations
 - Pre-purchase pharmacist consult appts availability – program mandates a pharmacist consult with a patient before patient tries a new medication, resulting in increased demand for pharmacist consults over past month. Patients seem very excited to try the new products. Manufacturers are setting appointments approximately 2 weeks out at this point, but both expect decreased wait times for appointments by late spring or summer, as demand evens out.
 - Purchasing limits - both manufacturers have imposed temporary purchasing limits to balance supply vs. demand (Current limits: Vireo – 10.5g/visit, LLL – 7g/week)
 - Limits intended to allow more patients to try the raw cannabis, but with each patient only able to purchase a limited amount. Both report they are working to adjust those limits as supply increases.
 - Opportunity to adjust those limits for people who must drive an hour or more to appts? Guidance is being given to personnel this week to make adjustments in limits for those who need to drive a long way.
 - Pricing – how are prices for the raw cannabis, and are they lower than prices for other medications? Avg. Raw cannabis vs. Concentrate pricing is being computed monthly – numbers not yet available.
 - Compassionate care discount available to some, such as those on MA, Veterans, etc.
 - LLL also offers loyalty rewards program and discounts
- Tribal Medical Cannabis Programs in MN
 - Chairman Michael Fairbanks, White Earth Nation, Lenny Fineday, White Earth Nation attorney, Bill Haas, White Earth Nation lobbyist
 - The White Earth nation is the largest tribe in MN, with 17,000 members enrolled, and many tribal members live or frequently visit both the reservation and travel all across the state.

- 90% of tribal members voted to pass an August 2020 referendum on creating a tribal medical cannabis program.
- In Jan. 2021, the tribe adopted White Earth Medicinal Cannabis Code, naming the White Earth Medical Cannabis Control Commission to regulate medical cannabis within the boundaries of White Earth Reservation, and a tribal business entity will cultivate the medical cannabis.
- The Tribal program will be largely like the state program. They are working with both federal and state agencies to develop a program offering high-quality, medical grade, strictly medicinal products.
- Working on legislation pending during MN current legislative session:
 - 1: state statute on transportation of cannabis products currently allows only the two licensed manufacturers to transport, would like amended to allow tribal transporting as well to testing labs.
 - 2: ensure that cannabis products can be transported from one tribal land to another. Tribal lands are not necessarily contiguous or connected.
 - 3: reciprocal access – tribal cannabis program members could purchase from state program dispensaries and state program members would be able to purchase from tribal program dispensaries.
- Chairman Darrell Seki, Red Lake Nation, Joe Plumer, Red Lake Nation attorney, Sam Strong, Red Lake Nation (Program Operations)
 - Red Lake Nation also held a referendum on creating a tribal medical cannabis program, resulting in a vote in favor of medical cannabis in the high 80 percent.
 - Working with Mr. Haas and the Chair of the White Earth Council on bills regarding transport rules, testing requirements, access to affordable dispensaries close to home, and dual access to state and tribal dispensaries.
 - Have already seen fentanyl-laced cannabis at Red Lake, and the criminality and violence associated with illicit cannabis.
 - Looking forward to being able to offer highly regulated and well-tested cannabis products to tribal members as a much safer alternative to street products, and to partnering with the state.
- Discussion on bills moving through legislature:
 - Increase in the number of manufacturers offering medical cannabis in the state
 - Annual fee reduction update

Action items

- Task force requests notice from Vireo one month before their acquisition deal is completed.

- Task force requests LLL and Vireo to notify task force when LLL and Vireo lift monthly purchase amt limits.
- Task force requests LLL and Vireo to forward to task force details of their respective loyalty rewards and discount programs.

Next meeting

Date: Exact date TBD

Time: TBD

Location: TBD

Potential agenda items: (submit proposed agenda items to Health.MedCann.TaskForce@state.mn.us)

- Update from OMC on dried raw medical cannabis rollout
 - Update from Pharmacy Board on changes in relation to hemp derivatives, especially intoxicating substances in edibles
 - Testing for toxicity of THC
 - CBD consumer protections
 - Education on manufacturer production processes
 - Update on bill changing patient registrations to be biennial instead of annual
 - Update on bills moving through legislature regarding firearms rights for medical cannabis patients
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- Meeting adjourned

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To obtain this information in a different format, call: 651-201-5598.