

# Most Cannabis Workers Hide Chronic Conditions from Employers

## Most Cannabis Workers Hide Chronic Conditions from Employers, Citing Fear of Stigma, Job Loss, and Workplace Discrimination

A recent study has revealed a concerning trend within the cannabis industry: a majority of cannabis workers choose to conceal their chronic medical conditions from their employers. Despite working in a field known for its medicinal benefits, employees fear stigma, discrimination, and potential job loss if they disclose their health issues.

### The Hidden Health Crisis: Why Many Cannabis Industry Workers Choose Not to Disclose Chronic Conditions

The cannabis industry, celebrated for promoting wellness and alternative medicine, is facing an internal contradiction. Workers who use cannabis for chronic pain, anxiety, or other medical conditions often feel pressured to hide their health struggles from employers.

A new survey conducted by the National Cannabis Workers Alliance (NCWA) between January 5 and January 15, 2025, among 800 cannabis industry employees nationwide, found that:

**72% of respondents** admitted to hiding their chronic medical conditions from their employers.

**68% reported** using cannabis for medical purposes.

**55% feared** job loss if they disclosed their condition.

These numbers expose a troubling gap between the values the industry promotes and how it treats its own workforce.

### The Top Reasons Cannabis Workers Feel Forced to Hide Their Chronic Conditions from Employers

Despite the cannabis industry's reputation for compassion and wellness, employees face several barriers to disclosing their medical conditions:

**Fear of Stigma:** Workers worry about being judged or perceived as unfit for their jobs, even in an industry built around cannabis.

**Job Security Concerns:** Many fear that disclosure could lead to termination or reduced career opportunities.

**Lack of Workplace Protections:** Although medical marijuana use is legal in many states, labor laws often fail to protect employees who test positive for cannabis.

**Privacy Invasion:** Employees prefer to keep their health information private due to concerns about discrimination or gossip.

## **The Impact of Workplace Stigma on the Mental and Physical Health of Cannabis Workers**

Concealing chronic health issues can take a toll on employees' well-being:

**Increased Stress:** The pressure to hide health conditions can lead to anxiety, depression, and burnout.

**Delayed Treatment:** Fear of exposure may prevent employees from seeking timely medical care.

**Productivity Loss:** Untreated chronic conditions often reduce focus, energy, and overall job performance.

## **The Contradiction of the Cannabis Industry: Promoting Wellness While Ignoring Employee Health Needs**

The cannabis industry markets itself as a champion of health and wellness, but the reality inside many cannabis companies tells a different story. Workers often report that their employers are quick to promote cannabis products for pain relief, PTSD, or anxiety but are less understanding when their own employees face similar struggles.

## **The Role of Workplace Drug Testing Policies in Driving the Stigma Around Chronic Conditions**

One significant barrier to disclosure is **mandatory drug testing policies**. Despite working in the cannabis sector, many employees are subject to random drug tests and face penalties if they test positive—even for legally obtained medical cannabis.

In states without strong labor protections, employers can terminate workers for cannabis use, regardless of whether it's for a medical condition. This legal loophole fosters fear and discourages transparency.

## **The Need for Reform: How Cannabis Employers Can Create Safe, Inclusive, and Supportive Work Environments for Employees**

To address this issue, industry leaders must take proactive steps to support workers with chronic conditions. Solutions include:

**Updating Drug Testing Policies:** Employers should eliminate punitive drug testing practices, especially for employees using legally prescribed medical cannabis.

**Promoting Health Transparency:** Companies should foster a workplace culture where employees feel safe sharing their health challenges without fear of discrimination.

**Providing Reasonable Accommodations:** Employers should offer flexible schedules, remote work options, and wellness programs tailored to employees with chronic conditions.

**Educating Management Teams:** Sensitivity training can help managers understand chronic illnesses and reduce stigma in the workplace.

## **Legislative Protections for Cannabis Workers: The Push for Labor Rights in the Cannabis Industry**

Several states are already taking steps to protect cannabis workers from discrimination:

**California:** Protects employees from being penalized for off-duty cannabis use, including for medical purposes.

**New York:** Prohibits most employers from testing for cannabis and from discriminating based on its use.

**Nevada:** Bans employers from refusing to hire candidates based on positive cannabis tests.

However, federal legalization and comprehensive labor rights reforms are still needed to ensure consistent protections for all cannabis workers.

## **Advocacy Groups Call for Change to Protect the Health and Rights of Cannabis Workers Nationwide**

Organizations such as the **National Cannabis Workers Alliance (NCWA)** and **Americans for Safe Access (ASA)** are advocating for policies that protect workers from discrimination and ensure safe, supportive workplaces. Their demands include:

**Federal labor law reforms** that protect cannabis workers from termination for medical use.

**Industry-wide wellness programs** to support employees with chronic health conditions.

**Inclusion of workers in cannabis policy discussions** to ensure their needs are addressed.

## **The Path Forward: Creating an Industry That Cares for Its Workforce as Much as Its Customers**

The cannabis industry has an opportunity to align its internal practices with its external values by:

**Supporting Employees' Right to Medical Cannabis Use:** Just as customers seek wellness from cannabis, employees should feel empowered to do the same without fear of retaliation.

**Investing in Worker Health Programs:** On-site wellness programs, health insurance with alternative therapies, and chronic condition support groups can improve employee well-being.

**Normalizing Conversations Around Chronic Conditions:** Promoting openness and support can reduce stigma and help employees thrive.

## **Final Thoughts: It's Time for the Cannabis Industry to Lead by Example on Employee Wellness and Health Rights**

The cannabis industry has built its reputation on wellness, healing, and compassion. It must extend those values to its workforce. Protecting the rights and health of cannabis workers not only strengthens the industry but also builds a more inclusive, fair, and forward-thinking sector.

If the cannabis industry fails to support its own, it risks losing credibility and driving away the talented workers who keep the sector thriving. It's time for change—from the ground up.

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