



# Preparing Your

# Workplace for Cannabis

Between eight states in the US allowing the recreational use of cannabis and neighbor Canada legalizing it on a national scale, cannabis will soon have an effect on the workforce and the workplace.

## **Are you prepared to deal with the consequences?**

In Canada, a study by the Human Resources Professional Association earlier this year found that 71 percent of HR professionals felt their organizations were [not prepared for the implications](#) of legalized marijuana. With [drug use in the US workforce at its highest in a decade](#), it would be wise to prepare for the inevitable impact of this change.

# The Black, the White, and the Grey: Drafting Organizational Policies



The increasing legal and social acceptance of cannabis raises thorny questions about safety, impairment, and use on premises. Such concerns are more pressing for jobs like commercial drivers and operators of heavy machinery, which require a high degree of cognitive response. But there are no [accepted measures of impairment](#), which makes drafting organizational policy tricky. Most organizations have refined their policies on drugs and alcohol over time to demarcate the black from the white, the “don’ts” from the “dos”. However, the addition of marijuana to the list of legal substances adds a shade of grey to these regulations.

Many organizations have employees undertake drug tests that check for traces of a psychoactive compound found in cannabis called tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in urine. A positive result merely indicates presence of the drug, not impairment. Until more standard measures become available, organizations need to develop their own parameters based on their safety requirements.

The most obvious options for your internal policy are to mandate a THC limit ([say, a whole blood THC level of 5 ng/mL](#)) and regular drug tests or to prohibit marijuana consumption on the job. Alcohol is an easy analogy here: while drinking is legal, you don’t expect your employees to show up drunk. However, what complicates this analogy is the use of cannabis for medicinal purposes and the unavailability of standard tests to gauge impairment. How do you accommodate employees or contractual workers who need medical marijuana while still ensuring they are able to function productively without posing a danger to themselves or others?

As an employer tolerating the use of cannabis for medical (or even recreational) purposes, you can draw up clear terms as part of your organizational policy. This may involve consulting a medical professional who has experience in evaluating impairment in the workplace. Your state’s [marijuana drug-impaired driving laws](#) may also offer some guidance. In any case, it may be wise to get legal counsel, since the regulatory waters remain murky.

## The Federal Outlook is Still Black and White

If your organization conducts operations across state lines, you need to abide by the law in each state. What's more confusing is that the federal government continues to classify marijuana as a Schedule I (highly controlled) substance, so that consumption continues to be prohibited by federal law even in states where it's been legalized.

In order to maintain uniformity in their approach to marijuana usage across its subsidiaries, many organizations with inter-state operations [continue to prohibit the use of recreational marijuana](#). Moreover, for organizations that rely on the federal government for funding (such as community health centers and colleges), the federal classification of marijuana will of course take higher priority.

For instance, the updated "Medical Marijuana Notice" from the Department of Transportation specifies that, even in states that have legalized it, [medical marijuana is not a legitimate reason for a positive drug test](#).



## Know Where Your Suppliers Stand

Once you've defined a policy for your workplace, and set processes in place to enforce it, there's still the question of whether your suppliers conform to your expectations. Even if your organization is compliant, you may still be at risk of violating (state or federal) law, and of increasing the likelihood of safety incidents.

This is where Avetta comes in: our experts can help you verify your suppliers and contractors have comprehensive drug and alcohol policies in place, and to make sure these policies align with your own code. With 15 years of experience working with the world's largest companies, we understand the implications of this new change on your existing supply chain.

One way we can do this is through supplier audits. We review your suppliers' safety and employee manuals, identify gaps, and offer recommendations. We also perform implementation audits and field audits to ensure that the mandated practices are actually being followed.

All of these will be tailored to your actual needs, based on the states your organization and your suppliers operate in, the risks of impairment among workers, and your organization's stance on the issue.

Learn more about how Avetta's [supplier auditing services](#) can help you minimize risk in your supply chain.



### About Avetta

Avetta connects the world's leading organizations with qualified suppliers, contractors, and vendors. We bring unmatched visibility to your company through cloud-based technology and human insight. As a result we foster sustainable growth for your business, as well as your supply chain. Our SaaS subscription software is used by 50k+ active customers in over 100 countries.