

THE CANNABIS CONNECTION

*Your information link to Missouri's
Division of Cannabis Regulation (DCR)*



MISSOURI DEPARTMENT OF
**HEALTH &
SENIOR SERVICES**

Division of Cannabis Regulation



JULY 2025

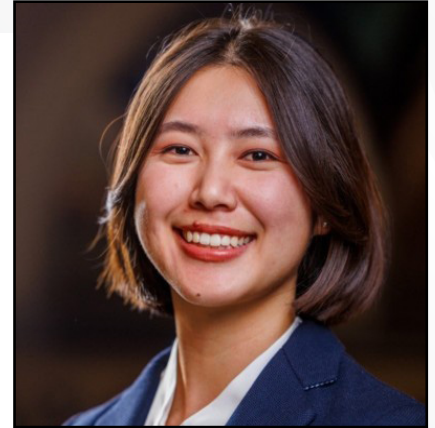
STUDENT CON

- 01** Introducing . . . Rieka Yu
- 02** Preparing for Commencement
- 04** Investigations
- 05** Medical Program Updates
- 06** We are DCR
- 08** Tax Revenue Disbursement
- 09** Be Prepared

Introducing . . .

Policy Director Dr. Rieka Yu

Before entering the policy space, I earned a Ph.D. in biology from the University of Missouri–St. Louis studying plant-pollinator interactions. I then took my research skills to support the Missouri state legislature by providing non-partisan policy analyses on health and mental health topics. I also worked with the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Task Force to compile annual reports on Missouri programs addressing substance use disorders. I started as the policy director at DCR in March 2025. I am passionate about using research to support evidence-based policies and am excited to be able to do so in this new role.



As the policy director, I lead the research, development, analysis and implementation of division rules. I analyze policy impacts and compare state and federal regulations to identify best practices and policies to effectively carry out Article XIV and DCR rules.

Currently I am working with DCR staff across all sections to create rule for marijuana research licenses. Article XIV gives DCR the authority to create licenses “intended to facilitate scientific research or education.” Last year, DCR held several listening sessions with regulators, universities, labs, researchers and industry representatives to gather information in preparation for rule drafting. In addition to writing draft rule, we have been creating internal processes for reviewing applications and studies and overseeing research and facility safety.

2025 CANNRA External Stakeholder Meeting

The Division of Cannabis Regulation team members attended the 2025 CANNRA External Stakeholder Meeting in Denver, CO, on June 9-11. The Cannabis Regulators Association (CANNRA) is a nonpartisan association of government agencies regulating cannabis and cannabinoids. The purpose of this meeting is to bring together national and international stakeholders to engage in discussions with CANNRA member regulators and other attendees on cannabis and cannabinoid regulatory and policy topics. Some of this year's meeting topics included federal cannabis and hemp policy implications, interstate commerce of hemp, educating consumers, emerging practices, and addressing overregulation.

Division Director Amy Moore was also reelected to the CANNRA board of directors and will serve a 1-year term.



PREPARING FOR COMMENCEMENT

Author: Ashley Yancey
Team Supervisor, Facility Development
Compliance Assessment Unit

Licensees must request and pass a commencement inspection and receive approval to operate before they may do any of the following:

- Begin operations under a new license or certification. (New license/new location)
The request includes any licensee that is ready to begin operations under a new license or certification or new location after a change request is approved must be submitted when the licensee believes it will, within thirty (30) days, be ready to begin operations at the facility.
- Occupy or utilize new space for which the licensee has not previously received approval to operate, including vehicles. (New space)
This request includes any addition to a facility that has not been previously commenced (including vehicles).
- Share space with another licensee. (Shared space)
This request is used when a licensee is requesting to share space with another approved licensee within a facility (including vehicles).
- Change the use of spaces. (Change use)
This request includes any request to change the purpose of an already approved space within a facility.
- In the case of microbusiness wholesale facilities, begin cultivating or manufacturing where that activity was not already approved after inspection. (Microbusiness wholesaler)
This request is used when a Microbusiness Wholesaler would like to begin cultivating or manufacturing where that activity was not already approved after inspection.

The general process for a commencement inspection includes the following:

1. The licensee gathers all necessary documentation, including blueprints of the facility. The blueprints must be labeled with the intended use of all spaces and how those spaces comply with the physical security requirements applicable to them.
2. The licensee requests a commencement inspection through CannabisCompliance@health.mo.gov.
3. DCR provides the licensee a Commencement Inspection Questionnaire to complete and return to CannabisCompliance@health.mo.gov.
4. The Facility Development Team (FDT) ensures it is a complete request.

Operational Deadline Variance

Deadlines never stop coming especially when you are opening a licensed cannabis facility. If you are confident that you are not going to meet your operational deadline, filing a variance is your best bet.

Visit the Facility Information menu at cannabis.mo.gov for the correct form and details about completing the filing.

Contact your Business Licensing Services (BLS) specialist for all questions about this variance..

Commencement, *continued*

5. FDT advises the licensee through email that the request has been accepted.
6. The Facility Specialist (FS) is assigned and reviews the request to determine which self-inspection checklist will need to be sent to the licensee for the request type. The checklist is sent to the licensee.
7. The licensee completes the self-inspection checklist and submits it to the FS along with the required documentation as outlined by the rule.
8. The FS reviews the submitted documentation to ensure all required information is provided.
9. The request is forwarded to the licensee's Compliance Officer (CO) for a physical inspection, if necessary. The CO schedules and completes a physical inspection.
10. After the physical inspection is completed and everything outlined in the request is physically compliant, the documentation is submitted through the supervisory chain for review.
11. After the review is finished and compliance with the rule is confirmed, an Approval to Operate letter is sent via email to the designated contact for the license.
12. As a reminder, licensees must not use the space or change the use of the space before receiving the Approval to Operate letter from DCR.

The FDT is responsible for processing and managing commencement inspections. This team is supervised by Ashley Yancey, the FDT supervisor. It is divided into three regions across the state: Kansas City (region facility specialist is Cody Stratman, email is Cody.Stratman@health.mo.gov), Central (region facility specialist is Alicia Smith, email is Alicia.Smith@health.mo.gov) and St. Louis (region facility specialist is Steve Bollin, email is Steven.Bollin@health.mo.gov).

For questions, please contact FDT at CannabisCompliance@health.mo.gov, or a licensee can email their facility specialist directly.

Investigations

**Author: Kourtney Blomberg, Manager,
Bureau of Investigations and Enforcement**

The Bureau of Investigations and Enforcement (BIE) is made up of the Investigations Unit and the Track and Trace Unit. The Investigations Unit is comprised of two investigation supervisors, each with four investigators that are primarily responsible for investigations and compliance issues, including those that appear to be related to inversion/diversion. BIE's Track and Trace Unit is comprised of a unit supervisor who has three staff members responsible for reviewing Metrc records.

BIE investigations may start from an external complaint, a compliance issue passed by DCR employees, through Metrc review, etc. For example, if an issue is observed on a package adjustment report or other Metrc query that seems out of the norm, the team begins a review into how things are being processed through Metrc to see if there's anything needing further investigation. As part of an investigation, BIE may conduct interviews, require documentation submission, review camera footage and seek process explanations. BIE investigations are conducting fact-finding reviews to determine if rule violations have occurred and determine if enforcement action is necessary.

When an investigation is initiated, BIE may send the licensee a Notice of Investigation (NOI). The NOI explains the licensee's responsibility to retain all records related to the subject of the investigation such as video camera footage. DCR understands retaining video camera footage may be a significant expense, so we do our best to narrow the scope of what it is that needs to be retained. Many times, licensees are not clear on the requirement to start retaining that video as soon as they receive that NOI. The video camera footage is important to maintain, as it helps both the licensee and DCR to verify information. For example, when staff are reviewing Metrc information and there are questions, the video camera footage can be used to correlate the information.

If a licensee receives an NOI and has questions or needs clarification, the licensee should reach out to BIE by emailing complaints@health.mo.gov. If preferred, the licensee may request a call with staff to discuss.

Individuals and entities can share problems or concerns about the Missouri cannabis program by submitting a complaint to DCR. Complaint forms are located at <https://health.mo.gov/safety/cannabis/complaint-form.php>.



Medical Program Updates

The Missouri medical marijuana program was passed by voters in 2018 and has remained the flagship program at DCR. Article XIV, Section 1 contains the constitutional provisions that allows patients and caregivers an avenue to discuss medical marijuana use with their physician, receive a recommendation from their physician, as well as to purchase and possess medical marijuana within Missouri.

Section 1 also includes protections for patients and caregivers who hold medical marijuana ID cards that further ensure safe, secure access to marijuana products. This includes protections for:

- possession, cultivation and transportation of marijuana products
- patients undergoing medical care or in need of an organ transplant
- employment; adoption, custody or visitation rights
- related activities that cannot be the basis for a violation of parole, probation, or any type of supervised release
- physician/nurse practitioner protections for patients who are under the age of 18.

How can someone apply to the medical program?

1. To apply, patients must first visit with their certifying physician or nurse practitioner.
2. The certifying practitioner will submit an electronic physician certification form to DCR through the online registry portal.
3. The patient will then create an account and log in to the online registry portal to create a new patient application.
4. The submitted physician certification form will be available in the patient application to select and include with the submission.

5. Patients must also submit a clear, color photo and a government-issued photo ID as part of the application.
6. If corrections or additional information is needed, the patient will receive a "rejection" notice with instructions to make corrections and resubmit.
7. Once processed, an ID card will be issued and can be downloaded from the online registry portal.
8. If an application is denied, patients have the right to appeal within 30 days and may reapply at any time.

Patients are also responsible to renew participation in the program and receive a new ID card. Patient ID cards are valid for three years. An updated physician certification form and digital photo are required to renew. Patients should first visit with their certifying physician or nurse practitioner. An ID card can be renewed up to 60 days prior to the expiration date.

Patients required:



to notify DCR of updates/changes within 10 days.

- Name, address, contact information change
- Change in desire to cultivate medical marijuana, cultivation location and shared cultivation space details.
- Increase in patient allotment (must be recommended for more than 6 oz in 30-day period) by physician or nurse practitioner. A new physician certification form is required.
- Voluntarily cancelling an active medical marijuana ID.

Meet our team

WE ARE DCR

Caleb Forrest-Dietzel

*Systems Research & Development Supervisor,
Program Development Unit*

I was raised in rural northeast Missouri. I graduated from Paris High School in 2005 and earned a B.S. in business management with a concentration in finance and a minor in criminal justice from Truman State University in 2010. Taking the first job out of college I could find, I started in pharmacy retail management and in 2012 went into the pharmacy benefit management space where I held numerous positions in a vendor role to the Department of Social Services' MO HealthNet Division, ranging from call center operations and project and contract management to systems project delivery and acting account manager.



In 2022, I began my career at DHSS in program management and the regulatory space as a prevention program coordinator for several federal grant programs in the Bureau of HIV, STDs and Hepatitis, and in December 2023 moved to DCR within the Section for Compliance and Enforcement, Program Development Unit.

When I am not doing the daily work, I'm usually spending time with family and friends, binge-watching shows and movies, following the news of the day, traveling when able or being found on the stage of a local theater.

I have been very fortunate to serve Missourians in the private and public healthcare sectors across a range of patient and consumer-facing and backend systems work that keep Missourians moving forward. I look forward to continuing to strengthen the systems and data that the state and industry use for the public health and safety of Missourians.

Jasmine Cooley

*Compliance District Manager, Facility Compliance
Unit, Section for Compliance and Enforcement*



I was born and raised in St. Louis. I completed my master's degree at Saint Louis University, School of Social Work with a concentration in communities and organizations. My passion for empowering individuals to overcome challenges,

serving communities, social justice & equality and connecting people with necessary resources has guided a majority of my path professionally.

I began my career in regulatory compliance with my position as a childcare facility specialist with the Section of Childcare Regulations, Division of Regulation and Licensure, DHSS, which is now Office of Childhood in the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. In this position, I became acquainted with state laws, rules and associated procedures pertaining to the regulation of childcare homes and centers along with prospective providers, concerned members of the community and public officials.

In August 2020, I started with DCR as a compliance officer (CO). Some of my responsibilities were inspecting medical marijuana facilities to ensure compliance with state laws and regulations, providing education, support and guidance to licensees, and investigating complaints. In July 2022, I was promoted to regional compliance manager for St. Louis, where I supervised a team of five COs. I have been in my most current position as compliance district manager since June 2023. It's rewarding to see how far the program has come and even more to have been a part of its evolution.

When I am not working, I enjoy traveling the world, taking on DIY projects at my house, watching a documentary and spending time with family & friends.

Meet our team

WE ARE DCR

Amber Sims

*Coordinator, Individual Licensing Team
Section for Patient and Application Services*



With over 11 years of experience in state government, I have been fortunate to serve in a variety of roles that have contributed significantly to my professional growth. My career began at the Department of Revenue, where I worked in the call center supporting inquiries related to individual income tax and business withholding tax. Over time, I undertook multiple responsibilities, including processing withholding tax returns, refunds, tax credits and W2s, and later returned to supervise the frontline call center team.

In Dec. 2019, I transitioned to the field of cannabis regulation, joining the medical marijuana program as a frontline team member. I assisted the public by handling inquiries and processing individual applications. Following the program's transition in Dec. 2022, I was promoted to individual licensing unit team coordinator. In this capacity, I supervise the frontline call center staff. Our primary responsibilities are serving as DCR's frontline team in the call center; issuing patient, caregiver, agent ID and consumer cultivator ID cards.

In addition, I serve as an ASPIRE ambassador and DCR's ASPIRE champion. These roles focus on fostering a positive and productive work environment by cultivating a culture grounded in trust, respect and collaboration. We encourage team members to embrace an opportunity mindset when approaching new tasks, rather than viewing them as obligations. I also provide support to our ambassadors and work closely with executive leadership and administrative teams to identify and remove barriers.

I am deeply grateful for the opportunities for growth and development I have experienced throughout my career and look forward to contributing to the ongoing evolution of this dynamic industry.

Bonnie Hood,

*Supervisor, Section Development Unit
Section for Patient and Application Services*

I joined DCR in February 2025, so I still consider myself a DCR newbie. My career started at the Missouri DHSS shortly after receiving a bachelor's in health science from Truman State. I worked as a health educator for Adolescent Health for a year before transitioning to a local public health agency. I loved working at the local level and worked for 6 years connecting my community to health resources. During that time, I went back to school for my master's in public health and then accepted a position as the Associate Director at Mizzou's Wellness Resource Center before coming to DCR.

DCR has been a fantastic place to work, and I love seeing firsthand how my work helps make the industry safer and more accessible for everyone.



Micro Message

Keep in Touch

Author: Lesley Turek, Chief Equity Officer

It's important to begin talking with DCR as soon as you are awarded your microbusiness license. Opening the lines of communication will help you understand the rules, make fewer mistakes and build a trusting relationship with DCR. Each licensee has an assigned business licensing services (BLS) specialist and a compliance officer (CO). Designated contacts were given contact information for assigned DCR staff members.

If you don't know exactly who to contact, email the general mailbox for each bureau. For BLS, the email is cannabislicense@health.mo.gov. For compliance, it is cannabiscompliance@health.mo.gov. These inboxes are checked every day, and emails are directed to the right person. It's a good idea to include your license number, name and the issue you need help with in the subject line. Be sure to give as many details as possible in your email.

BLS specialists work with license business change applications. They can help if you have questions about an operational deadline variance, changing your location or ownership issues and serve as a reference contact for general questions. They can also review any agreements for possible non-compliance issues.

Your assigned CO is also a great resource for you. They specialize in facility compliance questions and can quickly tell you where to find the specific rule that applies to the situation. They understand the requirements in getting your physical facility ready for commencement inspection.

If you're puzzled about who to talk to at DCR, feel free to contact me at lesley.turek@health.mo.gov or 573-522-1792. As the chief equity officer, I am happy to help microbusiness licensees connect with a DCR staff member or to provide resources or assistance that you might need.

Tax Revenue Disbursement

Author: Tanner Stephenson, Manager, Office of Operational Support

Did you know that every dollar spent on regulated marijuana product in Missouri results in a positive contribution to Missouri veterans, the state's public defense system and communities with high drug overdose rates, poor health outcomes and issues that affect health?

Article XIV, Section 1 states that fees and taxes received from medical marijuana is to be deposited into the Missouri Veterans' Health and Care Fund. It also states that the General Assembly will appropriate transfers from the fund to the Missouri Veterans Commission for health and care services for military veterans.

Article XIV, Section 2 states that fees and taxes received from adult-use marijuana is to be deposited into the Veterans, Health, and Community Reinvestment Fund. Again, the General Assembly will appropriate transfers from the fund to the Missouri Veterans Commission and allied state agencies for health care and other services for military veterans and their dependent families. In addition, appropriations are made to the Missouri Department of Health and Senior Services (DHSS) to provide grants to agencies and not-for-profit organizations to increase access to evidence based low-barrier drug addiction treatment, and to the Missouri State Public Defender to be used for legal assistance for low-income Missourians.

DHSS is thankful for the opportunity to be a partner among those who work toward creating a healthier, safer and more educated State of Missouri.

See page 9 for more information about how these organizations utilize the funding provided through cannabis tax revenue.

Revenue

The Missouri State Public Defender (MSPD) has been utilizing adult-use marijuana funds to support various expense needs. Specifically, MSPD has been using the transferred funds to acquire experts for court cases and to support cost of travel to Missouri courts and jails. Additionally, MSPD increased their contract council fees, which had not been increased in over a decade. Moving forward, MSPD plans to put adult-use marijuana funds toward their Holistic Defense Services (HDS). HDS was created in April 2022 to pioneer a more holistic approach to public defense. HDS is intended to help staff and Missouri courts better understand and address the root causes of people entering the criminal legal system. The services HSD provides focuses on three main activities, including connecting clients to community-based services, providing mitigation advocacy in clients' cases and ensuring that clients are receiving essential benefits that will help provide stability and set clients up for long-term success. The goal is to reduce pretrial incarceration, prison sentences and recidivism. MSPD has been transferred \$15,454,026 in adult-use marijuana funds to date.

Cannabis

The Missouri Veterans Commission (MVC) utilizes the regulated marijuana revenues to support the Missouri Veterans Homes Fund. The Missouri Veterans Homes Fund is used solely for Missouri Veterans Homes, which consist of seven facilities with 1,238 beds and provide long-term skilled nursing care in compliance with Department of Veterans Affairs regulations. According to the MVC website, the Missouri Veterans Homes offer a community environment for veterans with a team that not only takes care of physical and health needs, but also their psycho-social needs. Approximately \$52,978,820 from medical marijuana funds and \$27,136,010 from adult-use marijuana funds have been transferred to MVC to date. These funds have been used to support payroll and fringe benefits of employees who support Missouri Veterans Homes' operations, operational expenses, contractual payments and maintenance needs of existing infrastructure.

DHSS was authorized through Article XIV, Section 2, to operationalize the Missouri Substance Use Disorder (SUD) grant program using adult-use marijuana funds. The SUD grant program offers grants for substance use disorder prevention, recovery and treatment. The program prioritizes grants in Missouri communities with high drug overdose rates, poor health outcomes and issues that affect health. The goal of DHSS is for the SUD grant program to improve health outcomes and prevent and reduce the prevalence of substance use disorders and/or drug-related harms, including overdose. DHSS has allocated funding to the Missouri Department of Mental Health, Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education and Missouri Supreme Court's Office of State Court Administrator. DCR has transferred \$27,136,010 DHSS' Missouri SUD Grant Program to date.

Tax



Shout Out!

The DCR microbusiness program now has **FIVE** wholesale and **TWO** dispensaries that have been approved to operate. Congratulations to those involved for their hard work and dedication to the program.

Be Prepared

Author: Jasmine Cooley, Compliance District Manager

In Spring 2025, Missouri experienced a particularly active tornado season. On May 16, 2025, there was a substantial tornado eruption in the St. Louis metropolitan area, that resulted in extensive damage including power outages, injuries and even fatalities.

This devastating severe weather is a reminder to be prepared for emergency response situations. Licensees must ensure all facility employees, contractors and volunteers are trained in procedures for responding to an emergency, including severe weather, fire, natural disasters and unauthorized intrusions, per 19 CSR 100-1.080(1)(C).

Having the proper procedures in place in the event of an emergency can aid in maintaining facility compliance, keeping employees safe, preventing substantial property damage, product contamination/loss, etc. Licensees should review current emergency response procedures to make sure they are up to date and ensure staff are trained no later than one week after beginning work or within updating the procedure.

It is important to keep DCR and your assigned compliance officer informed of any issues that the licensee is experiencing. Additionally, licensees are required to report any security equipment malfunctions or events that affects the health and safety of the facility or its employees within 24 hours.

To report any issues to DCR, please email CannabisCompliance@health.mo.gov and your assigned compliance officer.



DCR COMMUNICATION RESOURCES

Stay informed



**Communication &
Resource Center**
One-stop shop



**The Cannabis
Connection**
Quarterly e-newsletter



**DCR
Podcast**
Monthly podcast



**Email
Subscription**
E-mail alerts



Cannabis.Mo.Gov



Check out our [monthly podcast](#) to hear about what's happening around DCR! If you have a topic that you would like us to feature reach out to Tara McKinney at tara.mckinney@health.mo.gov.

**For more
information,
visit us at
Cannabis.Mo.Gov**



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