

2019 Snapshot

Municipal Regulations of Medical Marijuana in Rhode Island



RI Division of
Statewide Planning



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Medical Marijuana in Rhode Island

In 2009, Rhode Island legalized the usage of medical marijuana under the Edward O. Hawkins and

Thomas C. Slater

Medical Marijuana

Act ([RI General](#)

[Laws § 21-28.6](#)).

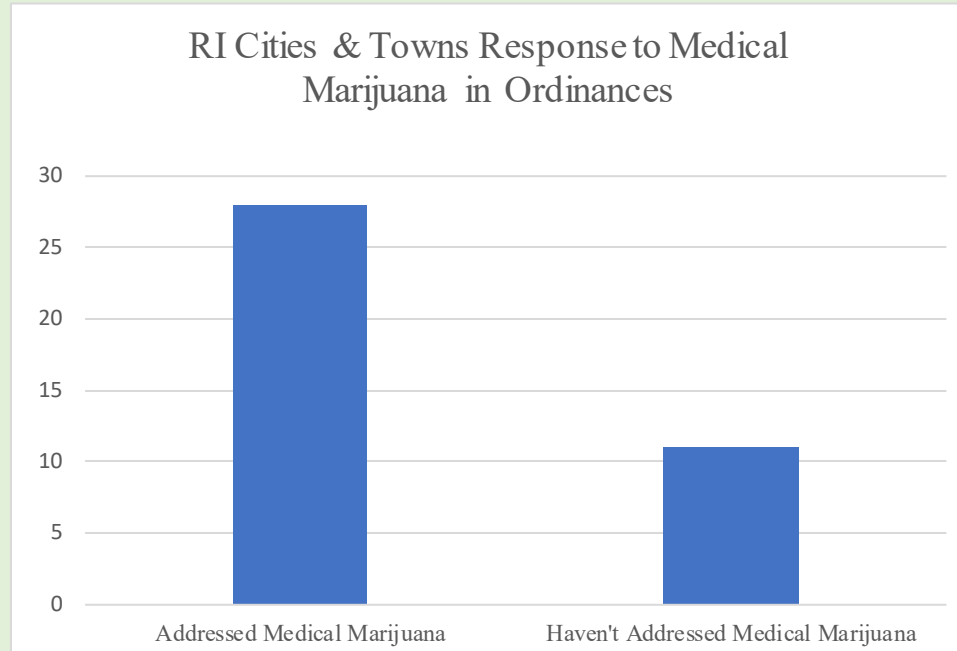
However, as was

mentioned earlier,

there have been

many different

responses to this



legislation across Rhode Island. Over the past few weeks, upon the request of the Rhode Island

League of Cities and Towns, the Division of Statewide Planning gathered information on all 39

cities and towns within Rhode Island to see how each municipality was dealing with the issues of

medical marijuana legalization and implementation. This was primarily done through consulting

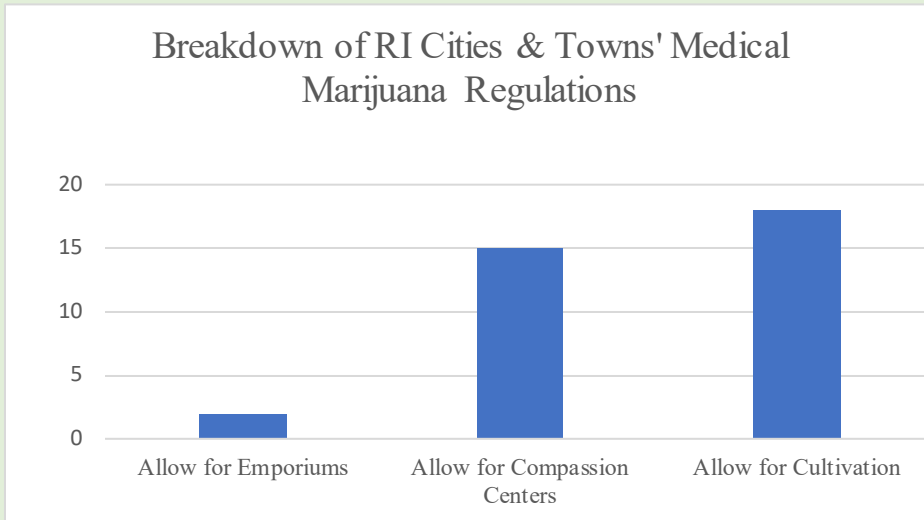
each city or town's zoning ordinance, reading local newspapers, and contacting the town

planners themselves. Research showed that **28 out of the 39 cities and towns in Rhode Island**

have officially addressed the issue, while 11 have not dealt with the issue, or are planning to

address it in the near future.

It must be noted that there are three distinct aspects of medical marijuana legalization. There are compassion centers, emporiums, and the process of cultivation itself.



A compassion center, as defined by Rhode Island's Medical Marijuana Act, is "a not-for-profit corporation that acquires, possesses, cultivates, manufactures,

delivers, transfers, transports, supplies, or dispenses marijuana, and/or related supplies and educational materials, to patient cardholders and/or their registered caregiver cardholder or authorized purchaser". Essentially, it is a place that provides medical marijuana to registered patients. Currently, there are three registered Compassion centers in the state with plans for another six locations next year. An emporium is similar to a compassion center, in the sense that it serves as a dispensary of medical marijuana, but patients are also free to consume in these areas, much like a vape lounge. Lastly, cultivation is the process of growing the cannabis plant, whether for personal usage or to provide to a compassion center; both require the possession of a license to grow cannabis. Because of this, cities and towns vary vastly in their respective levels of legalization of medical marijuana. For example, while 28 cities and towns have outlined their policies in ordinances, only 18 allow for some form of personal cultivation, only 15 have made compassion centers legal, and only 2 towns have legalized the construction of emporiums. This shows the complexity of the issue; some cities will prohibit compassion centers and emporiums,

while permitting personal cultivation, and vice versa. Other cities will permit compassion centers



Marijuana cultivation.

Image Source: unsplash.com

and/or emporiums and prohibit personal cultivation.

With medical (and recreational) marijuana increasingly coming to the forefront of American political discussions, it will

be important to track how cities and towns within the state continue to respond to the issue.

Sources:

- [*CHAPTER 21-28.6 - The Edward O. Hawkins and Thomas C. Slater Medical Marijuana Act*](#)
- [*12 things to know about RI's growing medical marijuana industry*](#), WPRI News (02/20/2019)
- [*Change gives legislators final say over medical marijuana dispensary regs*](#), Providence Journal (08/07/2019)