

Patient Services

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Learning Objectives

- What is the focus for medical marijuana dispensaries?
- How can you develop relationships with patients?
- Working with the whole medical marijuana community
- What are the basic models for dispensary services?
- Working with the local community to benefit everyone
- Other alternative wellness treatments
- There are many kinds of non-profit organization to work with
- How does patient education and training create great patients?
- Understanding the different forms of medicine
- Understanding the methods of ingestion
- Resolving conflicts with employees and patients
- Teamwork is invaluable

Introduction

Next to great cannabis there is nothing more important to a successful cannabis dispensing organization than patient service. A medical cannabis dispensary should be focused on professionalism; employing a knowledgeable and friendly staff in a clean and organized environment, leaving patients feeling cared for and respected. Service starts with the objective:

“All patients leave the dispensary with the goods and services they need, and a smile.”

Professionalism and a friendly attitude are paramount to achieving this goal. When patients come to a dispensary and find a clean and welcoming environment, and staff who are appropriately and professionally dressed, patients feel more comfortable and trusting of the organization as a whole. Patients that feel comfortable and respected are loyal and will choose to come back for their services time and time again. Those patients also bring in new clients through word of mouth.

The services staff has the first interaction with the patient when they walk in the door, call, or make contact online. That interaction will influence the patient’s decision to use the dispensary services; or make them decide they want to look elsewhere for a better option. Every interaction is important and should be handled professionally. The staff handle the bulk of the touchpoints for the clients and patients.

Services staff should greet every patient with a smile and be prepared with detailed information about the products and services offered. Dispensaries work to help patients identify medicines that work well for them on an individual basis. Many patients will be using cannabis for the first time, or for the first time in a long while, and they may need extra direction. Having a well trained staff that can educate and inform patients will be the cornerstone of a successful organization. Patients want to know that they are being heard and want their questions answered honestly.

Because medical conditions are very personal issues for many, some patients may come in hesitant to talk about their conditions. They may be embarrassed or unsure as to how to explain what they are suffering from. It is important to respect their rights as a patient, and allow them to disclose information as they choose.

Patients want to feel like their needs are being taken care of and that the staff is addressing their concerns in a timely manner. Staff should always attempt to empathize with patients and ask appropriate questions to help them make an informed decision about what medicine may be most beneficial for them.

Why Serving Patients Is Important

A sense of wellbeing and a friendly face may be the beginning to brightening a sick patient's day. Staff should always greet patients by introducing themselves and asking the patient for their name. This is important because it helps to develop a relationship with the patient.

When patients have relationships with the staff they are more likely to recommend that staff member to their friends, family, or people in their networks. It will increase patient loyalty, and help the organization to serve more qualified patients through word of mouth promotion.

Staff must work to create a level of trust with patients. On many occasions it is difficult for patients to divulge their personal medical issues. By working to gain their trust through positive interactions you can help them to better understand what medicine may work best for their needs. Regulations in Massachusetts forbid dispensary agents from giving medical advice. When helping a patient decide what it is they need you can and should refer to the success other patients have had; you may say:

“Our patients with that illness/symptom have found success with this strain/application/method of ingestion. It may be a good place for you to start.”

If a patient is hesitant to share what it is they are trying to alleviate, you may consider taking them into a private space or counseling area so that they feel more comfortable. Gently explain to them that you can only help if they are able to be open with you about their needs. You may say:

“I am sure I have other patients that have similar symptoms and that will help guide us to the best medications for your needs. We are all HIPPA certified and we can assure that any information you provide to me will stay confidential.”

While some patients may need guidance on types of medicines and their effects, it is important to understand that dispensaries are not medical professionals or doctors. Patients benefit from the experiences of other patients, so it can be helpful to give them information based on others’ success. A staff member never wants to make a decision for a patient, but providing positive guidance if asked for creates a positive experience for the patient that can make their decision easier. For many, choosing cannabis can be quite overwhelming, especially the first few times.

Confidentiality is an important part of the patient’s relationship with the dispensary. People from all walks of life who suffer from many different ailments will utilize services. Ensuring that their identity and medical information is kept confidential is extremely important and required by law. Good record keeping and security gives patients confidence in the organization.

It is extremely important to keep a calm relaxed attitude whenever dealing with a difficult situation, or

ailment that may impair communication. Great patient services require the ability to overcome challenges and provide quality service through even the most difficult situations. Patience is essential when working with patients.

Service staff must be prepared to listen to the needs of patients and ask questions without making the patient feel uncomfortable or anxious. Be aware of the details of a patient's story and pay close attention to what they are saying. It may help the agent to repeat back to the customer what they have said to ensure they are correctly understood.

"I have been dealing with nausea and excessive sleep from a medication I take for Bonnier's syndrome. I'm still working and I need to be clear headed when I am in the office, but the nausea is making it harder to leave home".

The patient gives a wealth of information in this statement. They give the exact illness, their symptoms, their daily activities, and their desired effects. A staff member can ask more questions if needed, and work to help the patient make a decision based on the types of strains and applications that are available. Patients may have certain preferences, or it is possible to make suggestions based on the experiences of others, or medicinal profiles. It can also be helpful to refer to the test results of individual strains as well as common effects that are available either through the dispensary or through websites such as Leafly.com.

If a patient is successful in finding quality medicines that work for their condition they will continue to access their medicines and services from the dispensary. If the medicine that was suggested and used proved to have the opposite effects than desired it can damage the relationship with the patient, it is much easier to lose trust than to regain it.

Because this is a new and emerging industry, medical cannabis will be foreign and strange to many and many will have no idea what is available, or what they may need. Supplying a variety of flowers, concentrates, food-based medicines, topical medicines, tinctures and vaporization equipment for use will be essential to educating the patient community, new and old. Explaining how to use cannabis medicines and the accessories used for consumption will help patients have positive experiences with their medicine. The dispensary agent must be trained to educate patients on all aspects of the medicine from strain types, to production processes and to consumption methods and tools.

The Face of Medical Cannabis

Each organization is part of a much larger community that includes patients, doctors, activists, public officials, law enforcement, and the town/city/county in which they are located. Because of decades of prohibition the cannabis industry is under added scrutiny, and the individuals that help make up the industry are the face of medical cannabis. Independently, the agent represents themselves, the company, the industry and the culture.

An organization's actions will also reflect on the entire cannabis community, for better or worse. This is why it is important for medical cannabis businesses to operate morally and ethically, and for the individuals that make up the organization to be good people. Building positive relationships in our local communities helps people to be more accepting of medical cannabis and dispels the myths and lies that have been created by decades of misinformation during cannabis prohibition. The community of long term supporters and activists may be even more skeptical of the management and operation of a cannabis dispensary or industry business, but these people can be one of your biggest assets.

Bad behavior reflects poorly on everyone and can result in unnecessary and costly enforcement actions against the entire industry. Many of the issues that are raised by people who oppose cannabis are based on isolated incidents; but these isolated incidents can result in knee-jerk policy decisions and resistance to

cannabis in communities that can manifest through burdensome regulations and restrictive zoning. For example, many people across the nation have been professionally or experimentally making their own concentrates in their homes. The process is often “open-blasting”, which is incredibly dangerous and has, on several occasions, caused explosions resulting in deaths. These incidences are nearly always featured on local news with comments such as: “A drug manufacturing lab for marijuana was found in the garage after the explosions”. These sorts of actions can result in additional regulations for dispensaries and production facilities from the state government.

In other states there have been enforcement raids of cannabis businesses based on the perception of unethical and irresponsible behavior. In October 2011, US Attorneys announced a sweeping crackdown on the industry where they closed hundreds of compliant businesses because of complaints they received about a few questionable operating procedures from folks who pushed the envelope. This resulted in the closing of many good businesses that were caught up in this sweeping enforcement. Similar actions happened in Colorado in November 2013 and even in Boston in 2010 where paraphernalia shops were enforced in a sweeping manner based on the perceived issues of one operator.

It is important to operate legally and in the bounds and spirit of the law. Your actions could not only hurt yourself, but could damage the reputation of the entire industry and restrict access to patients in need. The reality is that many dispensaries have been successful in creating positive messages for the industry through being upstanding members of their community and model businesses.

Dispensaries have been successful in providing community benefits and increased patient services with their resources. Creating goodwill through community interaction and support will help to give people a positive impression of cannabis. From assisting other local charities (such as food banks and homeless shelters), to creating positive programs of giving and support to the patients you serve through counseling, care packages, and alternative medical therapies, a dispensary has an opportunity to make a positive impact on

their community. By creating these opportunities for communication and outreach an organization can become a respected and trusted asset to the populations they serve. These interactions help change the dialogue and make it easier for patients in other communities to gain access to cannabis through understanding and cooperation.

Dispensing Services

Each state that has allowed for medical cannabis dispensaries have unique attributes that make them different. The industry is evolving in many new areas; and some states are having more success than others. There are two basic theories behind medical cannabis dispensary programs.

One is a more traditional retail model, where the dispensary operates on very similar principles as an over the counter herbal store. The other is a more strict pharmacy model, where every transaction is recorded and there are huge barriers to entry that include licensed medical professionals and burdensome operating requirements. Some programs are more of a hybrid of the two.

California and Colorado are two of the more robust retail type markets, where goods and services are purchased and sold in less restrictive environments with fewer barriers to entry. There is more competition in these markets, generally resulting in better value and promotions for patients. Some have criticized these markets as being too lax and not really medically focused. Some perceptions gathered have resulted in other states looking to curb perceived abuses in the system, even though there is little evidence of harm being done.

Some of the more restrictive state programs include New Jersey and Connecticut, where very few people qualify for the programs and providers are limited in their supply and ability to produce. What they have created are pharmacy-based models that attempt to control the supply chain much like prescription

drugs. They also are more restrictive in what conditions doctors can recommend cannabis for, meaning only very seriously ill people almost on their death beds qualify for the programs. This leaves a lot of people who could benefit from medical cannabis still second-class citizens with no rights. In the strict New Jersey program even severely ill children are not allowed access, forcing parents to move their children to friendlier states where children are eligible for the program.

Massachusetts is more of a middle ground. Here we have many patients with a large variety of reasons to use cannabis, the law leaves the doctor in charge of determining what is a debilitating condition. While on the other side of the coin, the operation must be completely vertical and the barriers to entry can be very high for investors. You do not have to have a background in medicine to work in a dispensary, but there is a required 8 hours of training annually related to your responsibilities in the dispensaries.

The reality is that what “medical cannabis” is, and how it is dispensed, are transformative and evolving matters. Programs are being adapted and developed all over the country. Regulations and controls are being created to meet the needs of each community; and unfortunately at times, they are being over-regulated to appease unfounded fears. Many of these stricter regulations may eventually be stripped away, as the industry unfolds both in the adult-use and medical arenas.

Dispensing cannabis is about getting the patient a cannabis medicine that is good and safe. In an open retail model, generally there are more varieties of strains and patients have direct access to examine samples of products before purchasing. With restrictions placed on a pharmacy model, there may be a more homogenous selection of medicines because of fewer producers and lower innovation. There is even speculation of using vending machines for patients, which completely lacks personal interaction. The common retail model allows patients to look at the different medicines up close, usually including smelling the raw flower products. Some retailers will pre-package medicine for easy sale, and others will weigh the medicine out in front of the patient during the transaction for a more personal touch. The retail model allows for a

greater chance of the patients bonding with the service staff, which can help with patient retention and relationship building.

In stricter models, some states require all medicine be pre-packaged in tamper-proof packaging that make it difficult for patients to look at and examine medicines they are purchasing. They have very extensive labeling requirements, as well. Overly restrictive barriers on production leave limited supplies available for patients that have resulted in dispensaries being closed for periods of time due to a lack of stock. There are also huge barriers as to who can be a patient, meaning you are dealing with patients with more limited scopes of medical conditions. In Massachusetts the dispensary must give the purchasing patient all their medicine in a tamper proof sealed package, but they may package it in the store in front of the patient.

Patients that have direct medical questions should not be answered by the staff. Medical questions should always be directed to a healthcare professional and/or physician. Inaccurate medical advice can be dangerous for the patients, and may cause liability issues for your dispensary. Sharing the experience of other patients experiences with certain strain types, or products is fine; but for example, telling a person certain oil “can help fight their cancer” is not the job of dispensary service staffers.

Questions about cannabis medicines and patient services should be answered to the best of one’s ability. When a staff member is not able to answer a question they should ask their supervisor for direction, or point the patient to a resource where they can find the answers they are looking for. Never give false or misleading information to a patient, even if you have a good guess, if you aren’t 100% sure, don’t answer. Staff members should always work to familiarize themselves with all medicines, products, and services offered by the dispensary to be capable of offering the best service possible and to provide accurate and relevant information. Some dispensaries opt for daily morning meetings where all products are discussed along with reviews and test results with additional detail for new products. They may also choose to refer

to the individual test results and general reviews from reliable websites.

Lab testing is required in most state programs. Labs specializing in cannabis medicines test for cannabinoid profiles and contaminants to make sure the medicine is safe, and to let patients know the percentages of active ingredients in any given product. Service staff should be familiar with the lab results for products and capable of explaining the profiles to patients in basic terms.

Medical cannabis products should have cannabinoid profiles that give approximate levels of THC, THCA, CBD, CBDA, CBN, and other cannabinoids to give the patient a comprehensive view of how the medicine may affect them. Labs have also began testing for terpene and flavonoid profiles that help patients identify certain smell or flavor traits in a given strain, or concentrate. Patients can use this information to identify traits that work best for them so they can continue to find medicines that are similar. Patients can keep records of medicines types that work for them.

Dispensaries have many ways of displaying medicines and information for patients. Some aspects are dictated by the state program, while others may be unique to a certain organization. It is important to know the regulatory requirements for displaying medicine and must comply with all labeling, packaging and informational standards set forth. Within those boundaries, your organization may choose to create unique methods of sharing information about the products and services being offered. It is important for service staff to be well-trained and aware of both the state and organizational standards for dispensing medicine, and work to achieve a high level of competency and efficiency. In Massachusetts dispensaries are not allowed to share their prices with any person aside from registered patients. Some are only going to offer in-store information and some are trying to create a private log in system through their websites for patients only, they are also not allowed to give medicine away but may offer discounts.

Hygiene is important when handling and processing medical cannabis. Appropriate safety equipment and tools should be used when handling cannabis medicines. Clean and sterile non-porous surfaces are all that should come in contact with cannabis medicines. All dispensing areas in the location should be clean and sterile before and after each patient. This will ensure no cross contamination as well as minimize the spread of any airborne illness or dangerous germs.

When handling medicine, staff should have their hair pulled back or covered; and in case of a minor cold or cough, staff should wear hygiene masks. Latex/non-latex gloves are good to use, even if using tongs or chop-sticks to collect and package the medicine in front of the patient. Staff should always present themselves as professional and clean. Maintaining uniforms or following a dress code will ensure minimum requirements are met to ensure the patients feel comfortable.

An organized and clean work environment helps to keep medicine orderly, and avoid issues with inventory or cross contamination. An organization system for all products and supplies makes work easier for staff.

Patients appreciate a neat and orderly system that makes their visit more efficient and professional.

A product organizational system could be based on product/strain type (indicas, sativas, hybrids), medicinal properties (i.e. CBD rich), item type (flowers, concentrates, edibles, etc.), quantities (grams, eighths, ounces, etc.); as long as all the staff are familiar with the system and are able to easily follow it. Non-medical equipment and paraphernalia will also likely be accessible to the patient for examination on shelves or in glass case displays. These displays should always be well organized by item type, product type, and price.

Record keeping and inventory control are vital aspects to providing quality service. When dealing with medical cannabis, service managers must regularly take full inventory of all products and ensure that sales

for the organization match inventory levels. Preventing loss and diversion are incredibly important, and service staff can expect to have their actions monitored for abuse. At any point regulatory officials may ask for all the establishments' records, so keeping accurate and timely records is necessary to avoid issues. Point of Sale systems are required for accurate sales history and inventory control procedures. Also, because there are purchase limits for patients, the system must track the patients purchase history along with the state so that if the patient is shopping in several locations they will not buy more than they are allowed.

Cash drawers and assigned inventories (where applicable) should be accounted at the beginning and the end of a shift, and verified by management. Cash drawers and inventories will be held in a secure space or safe when the shop is closed.

Each organization will have its own policies and procedures for dealing with these matters within the bounds of the program requirements.

Community Benefits

An organization has the opportunity to be more than just a store where people come to access their medicine. Medical cannabis organizations often become community hubs; and resources that bring people from all walks of life together under a common cause to increase quality of life and to make the world a better place. From offering social assistance to members in need, to helping the community at large in any number of areas of need (schools, homeless, hunger, etc.), the mission of any organization should be to benefit the community in which they live and operate. Designing and implementing these programs will help create goodwill for the organization, as well as provide much needed resources to people.

Being good stewards of the community helps the organization, the staff, and its patient members to feel a sense of appreciation and camaraderie through shared responsibility. Organizing community clean up days are

good ways to make a visible impact on the neighborhood you serve. Offering resources and/or volunteer time to local charities that serve the less fortunate can create lasting bonds and increase the positive visibility for the organization and industry. Community service projects may include organizing activities that will benefit patients with limited mobility or limited communication. Collecting backpacks for needy kids, or setting up a food pantry for members who may need some assistance are good ways to use the organization to help people and better the community.

There are many ways to interact positively with the community. One great example is a dispensary in Oakland called Purple Heart that worked with local law enforcement to organize a gun buyback program in an area heavily affected by gun violence. This program may have saved lives and also created national media interest that was very positive for medicalcannabis.

Organizing patients to participate in community benefits activities can help them to feel better through being able to give back, and can also create a social healing experience for folks who sometimes, due to illness, may not get out very often. Giving people a shared sense of purpose, and providing resources to be used to impact the community in a positive way, will create loyalty for the organization. People love to know that their contributions are also being used to help the community.

Working in conjunction with other like-minded non-profits allows the community to grow, and for the medical cannabis issue to be integrated into other causes that people care deeply about to create understanding and further acceptance.

Wellness Services

Alternative wellness services are positive for the patient community. Combining therapeutic services with cannabis medicines can help patients realize a more comprehensive alternative health plan. Many

of these services may be activities that many patients would not seek out due to cost or convenience.

Creating a safe space for patients to access their medicine, as well as other alternative wellness services, encourages them to add more encompassing healthy activities into their daily routine. A total holistic healing experience may include alternative medicines, and can encompass stress relief, chronic pain management, and whole body relaxation techniques.

Offering a more complete wellness experience for patients can help them to find a better quality of life and creates loyalty between the patient and the organization. Programs can be tailored to fit patient needs. For example the establishment may offer a variety of massage therapies, acupuncture, reflexology, or exercise like Thai chi and Pilates. They may also offer educational opportunities and support groups for specific conditions, or for nutrition and wellness topics. Patients can select services that work for them, and create a program that encompasses a total health approach to wellness.

Patient education is also an important aspect for wellness services. Ensuring patients know how to use, store, cultivate, or select their medicine can help them to achieve success. Many patients are unfamiliar with cannabis as a medicine and would benefit from being offered literature and educational resources about the medicine and responsible use. It also provides a comfortable space for the patient to ask questions that may be specific to their situation.

Wellness services and education will be different at every dispensary based on the specific wants and needs of the patients they may serve, or specialists they may have available.

Being the “Brand”

As a representative of your company you should aim to exemplify the brand that the company is trying to

create. All companies want to exemplify the best customer service to all their clients and ensure they want to come back. You are a touch point for the customer and the company brand may be very clinical, friendly and professional or completely relaxed with murals on the walls. This is important both for you as an employee and for the brand. Following the brand as a guideline will ensure that you are helping the patient while you are being the brand of the company.

Non-Profit Partnerships

Relationships with like-minded or supportive businesses and non-profit groups can be beneficial to both organizations. By aligning objectives with other goodwill and like-minded organizations a dispensary can foster positive relationships and expand their mission. Many great non-profit organizations lack resources to implement their vision, so dispensaries can often provide much needed human and/or financial resources to projects that benefit the community at large.

These partnerships and relationships are beneficial because many groups already have a lot of infrastructure in place to achieve an objective. Rather than trying to start one's own food bank, partnering with existing programs can help to achieve the same objective more easily. It can also help to share resources and do co-branding where possible to raise awareness for both causes.

When raising donations for a cause it is good to be very specific with the community about where the funds will go and how they will be used. Transparency is essential when dealing with non-profit partnerships to create trust with the community. It is important to be aware of and work with the norms and procedures of organizations you may be looking to partner with.

It is good to have relationships with the organizations that have political investment in the issue of cannabis policy reform, as these are the groups that are directly working to advance your mission and

create broader acceptance for cannabis.

Investing in well-known local charities and non-profit organizations create relationships that can benefit the organization where local control and policy are concerned. It is important to find causes that are not just important to the leadership of your organization, but also to the community you serve. Each organization will have different methods of deciding what partnerships they want to develop and nurture. There is no right or wrong direction; but finding reputable organizations that can also help advance the cause of and organization of the industry at large is a great idea.

Education and Counseling

Education and support are ways that an organization can create loyalty and give themselves an advantage in the market. An educated patient is a happy patient. Beyond just getting a patient medicine, an organization should look to ensure that patient is knowledgeable about the types of medicine available, how to use them, and how cannabis relates to other wellness and condition specific issues.

Many organizations hold regular in-house patient training course on basic subjects, such as ingestion methods, cooking with cannabis, or legal rights courses. This gives patients access to information that they can use to have a more positive experience with their medicine.

A variety of literature and books are available on the subject of medical cannabis. Making available handouts, or even making a library of books available, can help patients to better understand the sometimes confusing world of cannabis. Most state programs require that organizations provide educational materials to patients. A “Patient Handbook” can be a great way to give a basic informational guide to every patient who uses the dispensary services. All service staff should be familiar with educational materials so they may guide patients seeking information.

Support groups can be good to form with patients who may share similar life issues (vets, seniors, women, etc.) or who may have similar medical conditions. These groups allow patients to come together and benefit from shared experiences. These types of groups can be directed by staff, or even directed by active patients within the organization who you can provide a safe space for.

Some organizations have made professional counselors available to their patients on certain days to help with life issue, employment, or legal issues. Each organization will have a different mix of education and counseling type services they offer. Those who provide better and more relative services to their clients will benefit through retention and increased appreciation.

Conflict Resolution

Conflict is inevitable. Learning to deal with conflict, and resolve issues when they arise, are necessary to any business. Cannabis is no different. Whether the conflict is with an unhappy patient, or among staff members, it is imperative to identify the issue and find methods of appropriately dealing with it.

In any customer service position there will be unhappy clients. When those clients are medical patients with a variety of serious illnesses there can be even more issues to overcome. A calm and patient approach, along with the ability to see the situation from all sides, is a good way for employees to resolve conflict in an expeditious manner. Staff should want the customer to leave happy and satisfied, so that they return and continue to support the business. Learning to allow patients the space to explain their issue, and then working to solve problems will help to defuse a situation. Getting frustrated and taking an issue personally does not serve anyone's purpose. Most issues are easy to resolve, and if necessary management staff should be able to help.

The goal is for the patient to feel respected and cared for before they leave. It is important that they have

a positive experience, and are satisfied with the products and services of the organization.

Internal conflicts should go through the proper chain of command, and should be addressed in a timely manner to avoid it affecting the larger employee morale. There are bound to be issues when humans work together. Finding fair resolution to issues is needed to make staff feel supported and heard. It is never okay for internal conflicts to affect relationships with patients or quality of the products and services offered.

Internally, there may at times be conflict between employees, all businesses should have a policy for these situations, generally to be dealt with through Human Resources. This may involve a group communication and counseling to reprimand and termination. Companies generally have a grace period of 60-90 days as a trial position, this means that the company can release employees for any reason without action. After the 90 days, most companies have a policy for warnings and write ups. These should be used only when necessary and for minor incidences employees should be counseled about the issue privately.

Teamwork

Teamwork is always an invaluable factor for any organizational situation. A cohesive team that is friendly and ready to work hard can make or break a business. It is imperative to have a staff that works well together, and who have a collective focus of accomplishing the organization's objectives to the best of their abilities.

Team building is necessary. An organization must provide time and space for co-workers to meet and come together to share ideas and direction. Communication among staff and between departments is essential to success. Teams that are informed and who understand one another's roles in the organization will work as a cohesive unit and be able to more easily overcome challenges.

When teammates understand what other people are doing throughout the company, they are better able to discuss with patients who may have questions and any number of aspects of the company or the products. This also facilitates patience between teammates. For example, if the patient service associate has many patients waiting on a certain product that is out of stock, it can help the associate explain to patients what had happened.

A diverse and well-trained staff will ensure that patients receive the highest quality products and services. Staff must be aware of the organizations needs and be ready to pitch in where needed to manage tasks effectively. When staff are able to anticipate each other's needs it creates a comfortable flow and helps patients get what they need in a professional and timely manner.

Ensuring that all the staff understands the common goals and core objectives of the organization is vital to creating a cohesive work environment. When staff members understand their role in the larger mission they are more inclined to work harder to achieve common goals.

Team building exercises are a good way for groups and staff that will be working closely together to get to know one another better. Creating trust and camaraderie through group activities, outings and games lets staffers get to know each other and understand how to work together more effectively. Strong personal bonds among the team will create a positive and upbeat work environment that will translate into better service and more patient satisfaction.

Great Service = Success

Great cannabis medicines and product offerings are desirable for patients. But just as important to most is that they have a good experience. People appreciate quality service, and a staff that is friendly and

knowledgeable. Great service is what sets organizations apart; and what makes one organization a huge success, while others may struggle.

Patients desire knowledge and experience in their medical cannabis transactions. Because it is a highly specialized industry, it is necessary to be educated and aware of the products and services provided. It is important to have regular training for staff and regular updates for changing, discontinued, and/or updated products. Service staff is responsible for conveying to the patient what the organization has to offer, and to ensure they have a positive transaction.

Happy patients are good for business. When patients are happy with the service they receive they will often recommend the location to fellow patients, add positive social media comments, and return with future business. When patients are unhappy they will look for a location that fits them better, add negative social media comments, and turn potential future business away.

A happy and team oriented staff will always give better service. Employee morale should be a major focus of the leadership in any organization. A happy and informed staff will always do better work and provide better products and service. If there are issues to be addressed, staff should speak up and try to find ways to make things better. An open, organic flow of information is imperative for a healthy and thriving workplace.

Patient services staff provide a vital role to the organization. They are the direct link to the community and are able to ensure patients are happy. They also are capable of providing valuable feedback that they receive from the community to help the organization do a better job, or provide better goods and services. The service staff is the front line of the organization and is invaluable to the long term success of it. Members of the service team should embrace their role and enjoy that they are able to provide safe and effective medicines and wellness services that enhance people's lives. It is a rewarding position that goes far beyond the basic

retail transaction. It is a personal experience for many, and cannabis is still has a lot of social and political issues attached to it. Dispensing cannabis is an evolving industry that is full of excitement and growth.

Most people who provide medical cannabis services love their jobs. It is nice to be the bright spot in a patient's day, and that makes it easy to go to work every day. Your great service will make your organization and the industry as a whole more successful, so thank you.

Thought Provoking Questions

- What key aspects of patient services are going to ensure your patients coming back to your dispensary?
- Why is trust so important to the patient-dispensary relationship?
- How can bad behavior reflect on the community?
- Why is it dangerous for employees to answer patients' medical questions?
- How will community involvement help the evolution of the marijuana community?
- How are symptoms and diseases treated differently?
- What benefits do nonprofit organizations stand to gain from the support of a dispensary?
- Why are educated patients better for your dispensary?
- How do different types of medicine effect the body in different ways?
- How do different ingestion methods effect the body different?
- What can happen when there isn't a proper procedure for conflict resolution?
- How does a divided team hut the whole store environment?