

**NEWS:**

## **Rollout of Medical Marijuana Law Continues Six Years After Enactment**

**FEBRUARY 10, 2017** - The plodding implementation of Delaware's medical marijuana law is moving forward this spring with the opening of a Sussex County distribution center.

It has taken longer than expected.

The medical marijuana law was enacted in 2011, but its application was initially delayed by ambiguity over whether Delawareans would be subject to federal laws that still bar the sale and possession of cannabis.

The feds cleared the way in August 2013 when the U.S. Department of Justice issued [a memo](#) clarifying their enforcement protocols.

Delaware's statute calls for each county to have one medical marijuana distributor, which are designated as "compassion centers." Because marijuana is federally classified as a [Schedule I](#) drug, it cannot be distributed in traditional pharmacies.

Medical marijuana supporters say it can provide relief to patients who cannot be helped by traditional pharmaceuticals. In Delaware, patients suffering from a wide range of designated illnesses -- including cancer, Multiple Sclerosis, HIV/AIDS, and intractable nausea -- can get access to legal cannabis.

The first compassion center opened in New Castle County in mid-2015, but efforts to begin operations downstate lagged. That situation should be resolved before the end of



the year.

First State Compassion Center (FSCC) will operate the Sussex County facility under license with the state. Expected to open within three months, the venue will be located along U.S. 9, west of Lewes, in or near Nassau Commons.

Pamela Johnston, a spokeswoman representing FSCC, said they are organizing a neighborhood meeting that will take place in late February or early March. "[We] will invite all members of the Vineyards to participate and meet with our staff and tour our facility," she said. "Please know how excited we are for this opportunity. Our patients are your neighbors and family members and friends."



State Rep. Steve Smyk

Rep. Steve Smyk, R-Milton-Lewes, who represents the area, said FSCC has reportedly done a respectable job at the New Castle County Compassion Center, which they also manage. "It is my understanding that there were no complaints lodged by their Wilmington neighbors last year," he said. "I am eager to learn what protocols they will put in place to duplicate that record here."

The FSCC's Mark Lally said the Sussex County center would operate only as a retail location, with no marijuana plants being grown on the premises.

Kent County's compassion center is expected to open in the second half of this year. [According to the Delaware Division of Public Health](#) (DPH), Columbia Care will be preparing the production and retail facility over the next several months. The company reportedly has an extensive background in the medical marijuana field with operations in seven jurisdictions including New York, Massachusetts, and Washington, D.C.