

CPRC

CANNABIS POLICY
RESOURCE CENTER



ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN TOOLKIT

PREVENTION FIRST

OVERVIEW

Community assessment is critical to identify potential issues contributing to youth cannabis use. Completing a full assessment involves using several tools and methods. Environmental scanning is an important assessment tool that allows you to observe and document the cannabis landscape in your community, including advertising.

These observations take place at both on-premise and off-premise locations that sell cannabis and cannabis-derived products. On-premise retail locations, sometimes known as consumption lounges, are permitted businesses where customers can consume cannabis. Off-premise retail locations include licensed dispensaries, but cannabis-derived products also are available in grocery stores, convenience stores, tobacco shops, and gas stations.

Note that environmental scans are not meant to take the place of enforcement details. They may provide information on where enforcement is needed, but they are intended to gather information and educate your team and community.

Make visual observations regarding cannabis and advertising throughout your community. Social media scanning is also an integral part of the process.

TOOLKIT PURPOSE

Environmental scans aim to identify community risk factors that can contribute to underage cannabis use. Scanning lets you observe and document dispensary location, density, and marketing. Recording these observations and pairing that information with other assessment data, such as youth survey data, allows you to create a clearer picture of cannabis in your community. From that picture, you can then identify strategies to reduce underage use of cannabis.

This toolkit outlines considerations for conducting community environmental scans, including the following:

- ✓ Types of scanning
- ✓ Building your team
- ✓ Safety protocols
- ✓ Preparing to scan
- ✓ Conducting scans
- ✓ Documentation
- ✓ Sharing your results
- ✓ Appendix with sample forms

Types of Scanning

Because of the different regulations regarding cannabis sales, separating your scans may be beneficial. Here are three suggested types of scans:

■ *Dispensary and On-Premise Outlet Scans*

Scanning the community for licensed dispensaries and on-premise cannabis consumption outlets and their characteristics.

■ *Derivative Availability*

Scanning for retail outlets other than licensed dispensaries that sell cannabis products, either made from hemp or synthetically.

■ *Marketing*

Scanning the community and the media landscape (broadcast and online) for cannabis-related marketing, including advertising and sponsorship.

Building Your Team

Note that while involving youth is important, in Illinois, youth under 21 are not allowed in licensed cannabis dispensaries. Do not include them in scans of dispensaries if your team is planning to enter.

They should scan the locations and density of dispensaries, however, as well as help you understand the marketing and promotion landscape. They should also be involved in scans that include unlicensed locations selling cannabis-derived products, such as gas stations and convenience stores. In that case, ensure that you understand the local ordinances around derivatives – some municipalities have enacted age restrictions or outright bans.

Scanning thoroughly requires a robust team. Scans can be active or passive, overt or covert, and can involve a group, pair, or individual, depending on the type. Prevention coalitions can build a diverse team covering all sectors. Involving youth is essential to gain an authentic perspective on where, what, and their exposure to cannabis products. Ideally, groups or pairs would combine youth and adults when scanning a physical location or community advertisements. Law enforcement officers are great partners to include, too. Individual youth can covertly scan social media and mass media.



Safety Protocols

Safety is the number one priority. Always conduct scans of physical locations in pairs or groups. If involving youth in the scan, an adult should always be present. Youth can complete social media scans individually by observing their profile feed for cannabis products and advertising. Here are some additional safety tips:

- If a location feels unsafe, do not scan it. It is OK to leave.
- Do not scan a physical location alone.
- Determine a safety signal or alert ahead of time. Use the signal if there's a safety issue.
- Be respectful of other customers and employees during the scan.
- Let the business know why you are there when you arrive
- If asked to leave, do so quickly and quietly.
- When scanning social media sites, do not interact – only observe.

Preparation

Begin by determining the area to scan.

- Will you check the entire community or county?
- Will you check a neighborhood or city block?
- What social media sites will you scan?

If you are scanning physical locations, you must know who sells and serves cannabis products in your area. You can find licensed cannabis dispensary locations on the Cannabis Regulatory Oversight Office's (CROO) website: <https://cannabis.illinois.gov/about/locations.html>. You can search by city, county, or zip code to narrow down the map.

Once you have determined the area and locations, create a list or map to decide the licensees or locations you will scan and assign teams. Provide the team with a map or list of locations. Teams or groups should always scan physical locations. Assign at least one adult if a youth team scans.

Hold a meeting before the scan to share details, such as locations to scan, team rosters, emergency contact numbers, and timeline. Prepare all the forms for your scan, including signed parent permission forms. Sample forms are in the appendix.

Dispensary and On-Premise Outlet Scans

Dispensaries

Take a picture of the storefront. Catalog your photos by location and match the digital data with your written documents.

Check the signage. In Illinois, there are rules on allowed signage. See the appendix for more details.

Note whether the location is near any sensitive locations, such as other dispensaries, schools, parks, places of worship, or daycare facilities. Aside from these locations, also note how community members may encounter the location. Is it along a route to school or other places youth gather? Is it in a highly visible area? This will help you to determine what may contribute to community norms around cannabis use.

Dispensary Products

Because of how dispensaries operate, it will be hard to scan and browse products on-site without interrupting normal operation. However, you can complete a product scan online as dispensaries host their inventories online. Again, an adult should do this scan. You can check for:

- Types of products
- Price promotions
- Potency of products*

**It may also be beneficial to break down potency by product type, especially as the potency of certain types of products like cannabis flower increases.*

On-Premise Consumption Locations

Depending on the community where you are conducting your scan, certain locations may be permitted to serve cannabis products at the business. These are known as on-premise locations.

On-premise scans will differ from off-premise scans because municipalities have broader authority to regulate their operations. Get familiar with your community's rules about on-premise locations to determine what you may scan. This may include similar rules to off-premise locations or may not.

- Operating hours
- Co-location with other cannabis licenses, alcohol outlets or tobacco shops
- Distance from sensitive locations, such as schools, parks, places of worship, or licensed daycare facilities
- Distance from (if applicable) public transportation options
- Signage

Derivative Sales

Cannabis-derived products, or synthetically-derived cannabis products, can be found for sale in places other than licensed cannabis outlets. These can include gas stations, convenience stores, smoke shops, and grocery stores. Conduct this scan separately from licensed cannabis outlets, as the rules around cannabis-derived products are quite different, and you will be looking for different characteristics.

Additionally, because cannabis-derived products are sold in a variety of locations, some pre-visit research may be necessary, including speaking to key stakeholders or youth in the community about which outlets may be selling these products.

Physical Advertisements

Youth regularly see cannabis advertisements. Complete an advertising scan with physical location scans or on their own. Choose what community area you are scanning, map the route to perform the scan, and assign locations to the scanning teams.

The Illinois Cannabis Regulation and Tax Act (CRTA) prohibits cannabis advertising in the following locations, so make special note of these if you find them:

- Within 1,000 feet from a school, playgrounds, park, child care center, or game arcade that allows people under 21
- On or in a public transit vehicle or public transit shelter
- On or in any publicly owned or publicly operated property

Additionally, the law prohibits any advertising that:

- Is false or misleading
- Promotes excessive consumption
- Depicts a person under 21 years of age consuming cannabis
- Includes the image of a cannabis leaf or
- Includes any image designed to likely to appeal to minors

Media Advertisements

Although the advertisement of cannabis products is a new frontier, and research is needed, early results indicate some types of advertisements contribute to youth use.* Scanning for media cannabis advertisements should be part of the assessment process.

Youth and adults can conduct media advertising scans or screen time scans individually over a period determined by the coalition. Media scans should be observatory in nature. Advertisements observed on social media should not be clicked. Here are a few things to consider for media scans:

- Did a cannabis company sponsor a community event? Where was their logo? What products were advertised?
- *Social Media* – was it a pop-up ad? Was it a video you had to watch to get to the following video of your choice? Did it involve an influencer? Was there a challenge? Did you see cannabis products in your social media feed? Was it a banner?
- Were cartoon characters or other images that appeal to children used for advertising products?

*A 2021 *Journal of Studies on Alcohol and Drugs* study found an association between billboard advertising and rates of cannabis use disorder.



Documentation

Document environmental scans through forms and pictures. Also document where advertising is located in the community; where billboards are located, where and how much cannabis-related window advertisements are located, and other observations. Tailor the example forms included in the appendix to your community. Create maps of advertising or physical outlets with locations where youth gather or close to other sensitive locations.

Follow up your scans by holding conversations in your community with stakeholders about their experiences. Do youth notice the cannabis landscape features you documented in your scan, such as billboards and other advertisements? Are they aware of the physical locations of dispensaries, and do they encounter them regularly? This will help you to understand the impact of the features you observed in your scan.

You can hold formal conversations like these through focus groups. Training and resources on focus groups are available through Prevention First.

Creating a picture of cannabis exposure in your community will help inform both your assessment and your elected officials and cannabis regulators.

Sharing Your Results

Environmental scanning of your community is vital in assessing community norms around cannabis, as well as youth exposure to cannabis.

- Share your findings during a coalition meeting to help set goals and determine prevention strategies.
- Create press releases highlighting your findings.
- Host a town hall to allow coalition members, including your youth sector, to share their scanning experiences and results.
- Follow up your scans with letters to the businesses you visited. Let them know what your scan revealed and how they can implement changes to prevent underage access to cannabis.

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APPENDIX

- ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN CHECKLIST
- PARENT PERMISSION AND PHOTO RELEASE
- DISPENSARY LOCATION SCAN TOOL
- ON-PREMISE LOCATION SCAN TOOL
- PHYSICAL ADVERTISEMENT SCAN TOOL
- MEDIA SCAN TOOL

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN CHECKLIST

Signed Parent and Photo Permission slip

Reviewed safety protocols

Assigned teams

Determined the area to scan

Determined the type of scan (dispensary/retail, on-premise, advertising, media)

Generated a list or map

Gathered supplies (clipboards, scan forms, tablet/iPad, pens, etc.)

Conducted pre-scan briefing

Saved emergency contact numbers

Shared scan intention letter with retailers

Conducted post-scan briefing

Shared scan results

ENVIRONMENTAL SCAN PARENT PERMISSION

Volunteer Name: _____ Name Of Parent Or Guardian: _____

Date Of Birth: _____ Phone: _____

Home Address: _____ Email: _____

City: _____ State : _____ Zip: _____

Emergency Contact Name: _____

Phone: _____

It should read: I, _____, parent/guardian of _____ give my consent to participate in the environmental scan activity hosted by _____ coalition on (date/time).

I have reviewed all safety protocols with my child and have provided all emergency contact information.

*I release and waive the (insert coalition name) _____, as well as adult members for this scan, from and against any claim which I, any other parent or guardian, any sibling, the youth volunteer, or any other person, firm or corporation may have or claim to have, known or unknown, directly or indirectly, from any losses, damages or injuries arising out of, during or in connection with the volunteer's participation in the scan, or the rendering of emergency medical procedures, if any.**

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

Photo Permission

Name of youth volunteer: _____

May be photographed

May NOT be photographed

Permission is granted to use images for press releases and other educational purposes.

Do not use images for press releases and other educational purposes.

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____ Date: _____

*Language is used as an example. Consult with your legal team to determine the release and waiver statement.

DISPENSARY LOCATION SCAN TOOL

Dispensary Name: _____ Date: _____

_____ Time: _____

Address: _____ City or Community Area: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Team Members: _____

Location

Is the location within:

• 1,000 feet of a school, child-care center, or public park? Yes No

• Type: school, child-care center, public park

• Location name: _____

• Address: _____

• An area where youth congregate Yes No

• Description of area: _____

• Address: _____

• Located a downtown, central business district, or other area with high pedestrian or vehicle traffic Yes No

• Co-located with another cannabis business. Yes No

• If so, name and address of business:

ON-PREMISE LOCATION SCAN TOOL

On-Premise Location Name: _____ Date: _____

_____ Time: _____

Address: _____ City or Community Area: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Team Members: _____

Location

Is the location within:

• 1,000 feet of a school, child-care center, or public park? Yes No

• Type: school, child-care center, public park

• Location name: _____

• Address: _____

• An area where youth congregate Yes No

• Description of area: _____

• Address: _____

• Located a downtown, central business district, or other area with high pedestrian or vehicle traffic Yes No

• Co-located with another cannabis business. Yes No

• If so, name and address of business:

• Near public transportation (bus stop or train station) Yes No

PHYSICAL ADVERTISEMENT SCAN TOOL

Scanning your community for cannabis advertisements helps to assess contributing factors to underage cannabis use. Physical advertisements that youth find appealing may contribute to viewing cannabis use as less risky or more socially acceptable. When planning your scan, choose which geographic areas to scan, map your route, and assign locations to your different scanning teams as applicable.

Location or neighborhood: _____

Date and Time: _____

Team Members: _____

- Have you observed free-standing or building-attached billboards advertising cannabis?

Yes No

- What types and brands of cannabis are advertised on billboards?

- How close are the billboards to places where children gather?

- If imagery appears on billboards that may appeal to children, describe it here:

- If advertising makes any health claims, describe it here:

- Are there cannabis companies advertising on other fixed locations?

Yes No

Name of other locations:

- Have you observed any alcoholic beverage company-sponsored local events?

Yes No

- What type of event?

- What cannabis brand sponsored the event?

- Are cannabis beverage logos on banners, t-shirts, cups, or other items?

Yes No

- If the event is a youth sporting event, are youth under twenty-one wearing logos as a part of their uniform?

Yes No

Print

Date	Name of publication	Number of Cannabis-related Ads viewed	Brands Advertised	Celebrity/Influencer Endorsment (name and brand)	Cannabis-Company sponsored event (concert sporting event, etc.)



EVERY DECISION MATTERS.

Headquarters

2800 Montvale Drive

Springfield, IL 62704

P: (217) 793-7353

F: (217) 793-7354

Toll-Free: (800) 252-8951

Branch Office

33 W. Grand Avenue, Ste. 300

Chicago, IL 60654

P: (312) 988-4646

F: (312) 988-7096

Toll-Free: (800) 252-8951

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