

May 17, 2018

Hi Tanya-

I am a recruiter with Portland Police Bureau and wanted to answer your questions on marijuana and law enforcement.

In general, you cannot use any form of marijuana (to include medical) and be in any form of law enforcement due to it being a federally controlled substance.

State laws legalizing marijuana are overridden by federal rules that prohibit carrying firearms/ammunition if you use controlled substances and any agency receiving federal funding, as all law enforcement do, must be a drug-free workplace.

All law enforcement agencies, both local and federal have recognized that since marijuana is legalized in many states, policies regarding use must be changed to reflect this so most agencies have instituted a "time since last use" rule rather than "any use disqualifies" an applicant.

For the Portland Police Bureau, it does not matter how much marijuana the applicant has used in the past, but they must stop using one year prior to applying for the Police Officer position and of course, cannot use thereafter.

By state law, if an applicant has any drug related criminal convictions on their record (regardless whether it is marijuana or other illegal drugs) they are disqualified from applying for a law enforcement position.

Locally agencies have set their own adjusted standards around marijuana use which varies from 6 months since last use up to 3 years. Agencies in states where marijuana is not legal may still have the policy of any use is disqualifying.

Federal law enforcement agencies have also been making adjustments in their stance on marijuana use similar to the "time since last use standard".

The most important thing is that candidates are honest about their use. What we find is they try to hide the true amount of marijuana use in their past and during the background investigation it is discovered. This then permanently disqualifies them from ever applying again because they were dishonest in the application process. With all that said, if someone is interested in a career in law enforcement it is best to just not use marijuana. Even though it is legal and treated much like alcohol now, this does not apply to this career field. The less exposure and use of marijuana sets them up as a more viable candidate in law enforcement.

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