Medical marijuana dispensaries are places where marijuana is sold to individuals authorized to use it for medical purposes. Although medical marijuana is legal in many states, there is wide variation in the local or state policies that regulate the location and operation of medical marijuana dispensaries. The C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital National Poll on Children’s Health asked a national sample of parents about their views on the location of medical marijuana dispensaries.

Most parents indicated they are in favor of legal medical marijuana, either for adults only (42%) or for any age (32%), while 26% of parents were opposed to medical marijuana. Nearly half of parents (45%) said that medical marijuana is legal in their state, and 24% knew there was at least one medical marijuana dispensary in their community. Only 20% of parents reported that their state or community has regulations about where dispensaries can be located; most (59%) did not know if such regulations exist in their state or community.

About three quarters of parents said medical marijuana dispensaries should be banned within a certain distance of schools; this level of support was the same for both elementary (74%) and middle/high schools (73%), and did not differ by parent gender, age, income or education. A majority of parents also felt dispensaries should be banned within a certain distance of daycare centers (68%) or home daycares (59%). In contrast, only 44% of parents thought dispensaries should not be allowed near places of worship.

Seven in ten parents (69%) agreed that parents should have a say in whether a dispensary is located near their child’s school or daycare. Parents’ greatest concerns about medical marijuana dispensaries located near schools or daycares were people driving while impaired (52% very concerned), children finding edible marijuana (48% very concerned), and teens having an easier chance of getting marijuana (49% very concerned). Other concerns were that dispensaries would set a bad example (45% very concerned) or bring violent crime to the area (35% very concerned).

Most parents (77%) agreed that medical marijuana dispensaries should have the same regulations as liquor stores for where they can be located. At the same time, 52% of parents agreed that dispensaries should have the same rights as other businesses. Nearly all parents (90%) felt dispensaries should undergo inspections to ensure they are following all regulations.
Implications
This Mott Poll addresses a topic that has received little attention: whether parents believe the location of medical marijuana dispensaries poses a risk to children. Although medical marijuana is legal in about two-thirds of US states, there is not a consistent framework at either the state or local level to regulate the location and operations of dispensaries. Moreover, some states may have additional legal complexities differentiating the sale of medical vs recreational marijuana. The lack of established standards may lead officials to enact policies that either fail to address parents’ key concerns or impose more stringent regulations that parents would prefer.

Overall, parents are not against medical marijuana. Three quarters of parents in this Mott Poll indicated their support for legal medical marijuana; this includes one third of parents who support the option for children to use medical marijuana. Parents may want to include regular and rigorous inspections in their efforts to advocate for the location of dispensaries. However, a familiar analogy for many parents is liquor stores, which also are governed by state laws and local ordinances; these Mott Poll results suggest that parents may support a similar approach for dispensaries.

The most widespread parent belief shown in these results is for inspections of medical marijuana dispensaries to ensure they are complying with all regulations. Parents may want to include regular and rigorous inspections in their efforts to advocate for strategies to limit the risk to children from dispensaries.

Data Source & Methods
This report presents findings from a nationally representative household survey conducted exclusively by GfK Custom Research, LLC (GfK), for C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital. The survey was administered in October 2018 to a randomly selected, stratified group of parents age 18 and older (n=2,007). Adults were selected from GfK’s web-enabled KnowledgePanel® that closely resembles the U.S. population. The sample was subsequently weighted to reflect population figures from the Census Bureau. The survey completion rate was 60% among panel members contacted to participate. This report is based on responses from 2,007 parents who had at least one child 0-18 years. The margin of error is ±2 percentage points.

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Findings from the C.S. Mott Children’s Hospital National Poll on Children’s Health do not represent the opinions of the University of Michican. The University of Michigan reserves all rights over this material.