Illinois residents dealing with chronic pain have been given an alternative to opioids — medical marijuana. SB 336 was signed into law in August. It provides certain individuals 21 and older with temporary access to the state’s existing medical cannabis program. This access is contingent on a licensed physician certifying that the individual has a condition for which opioids might be prescribed.

Participants must then register at a state-licensed dispensary. Dispensations are limited to 2.5 ounces every 14 days and cannot exceed 90 days per physician certification. The goal of the new law is to curb opioid addiction; according to the Illinois Department of Public Health, opioid deaths in the state increased 13 percent from 2016 to 2017.

Four other Midwestern states — Michigan, Minnesota, North Dakota and Ohio — have broad laws legalizing medical marijuana, Governing magazine reports. Earlier this year, the Minnesota Department of Health released a study showing that among patients using medical cannabis for “intractable pain,” the use of opioid medications fell by 38 percent. In June, Michigan added chronic pain to its list of debilitating medical conditions that qualify a person for the medical use of marijuana.
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