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Cannabis Workers Must Complete Annual Training Before They Can Work in Licensed Businesses

All employees of licensed cannabis businesses must complete responsible vendor training before obtaining an agent ID and beginning work. The course lasts about two hours, must be repeated annually and is currently offered in person on a limited basis.

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Ernice Gilbert **July 31, 2026**

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Every employee of a licensed cannabis business must complete responsible vendor training and obtain a cannabis business agent identification card before working in the industry, Office of Cannabis Regulation Executive Director Joanne Moorehead told the Cannabis Advisory Board Thursday.

The requirement applies across licensed operations, including microcultivation businesses, commercial cultivators, manufacturers and dispensaries.

“Cannot be employed in a cannabis business of any kind,” Moorehead said when asked what happens if a worker fails to complete the training.

She explained that a cannabis business agent ID can be issued only after the applicant completes the course. The identification card is required for employees of every licensed cannabis business.

“The law says that the training must be conducted annually within 30 days of employment by a cannabis business and annually thereafter,” Moorehead said.

The responsible vendor course generally requires about two hours, although sessions may run longer depending on participation. “The class is two hours. If there are lots of questions, and sometimes it's like two and a half hours, but generally speaking, it's about two hours.”

Required areas of instruction include the effects of cannabis products on the body, the onset and duration of impairment and how to recognize signs that someone is impaired.

The curriculum also covers acceptable forms of identification, detecting fraudulent identification, validating medical cannabis patient and agent cards, required health and safety standards, permitted sales hours and prohibited purchases.

Workers are also instructed on recordkeeping, transport manifests, privacy protections and other subjects deemed necessary by OCR.

Moorehead said the course is weighted somewhat toward retail operations because dispensaries and other retail businesses have the most direct interaction with consumers. Members of the public cannot purchase products directly from cultivators or manufacturers.

The training currently includes a basic explanation of the difference between cannabis and hemp, but OCR has not yet developed hemp-specific instruction because regulations for intoxicating hemp and artificially derived cannabinoid products are still being finalized.

Training has so far been conducted in person on St. Croix and St. Thomas. OCR has not held a separate class on St. John, although participants from St. John have attended sessions on St. Thomas.

Moorehead said the in-person requirement is tied partly to rules requiring the identities of participants to be verified and trainees to pass an examination.

Although the law permits an online option, she said developing a system capable of verifying participants' identification remotely would be more complicated and costly. She suggested that online renewal courses could potentially become available in the future after workers complete their initial training in person.

The course is currently being offered on a limited basis while OCR awaits approval of a memorandum of understanding from the Department of Property and Procurement that would allow an outside vendor to conduct the training.

OCR plans to announce additional training sessions and any approval of the outside vendor through its newsletter.

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