



Policy/Position Statement

of the American Cannabis Nurses Association

Release Date: July 9, 2021

Statement Regarding Olympic hopeful Sha'Carri Richardson's suspension after testing positive for THC

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Status: New Position Statement

Written by: ACNA Policy and Government Affairs Committee

Adopted by: ACNA Board of Directors

The American Cannabis Nurses Association (ACNA) is deeply disappointed to hear that Sha'Carri Richardson, an Olympic hopeful has been suspended for a month after testing positive for THC.

ACNA's mission is to educate and advocate for safe and appropriate use of cannabinoids. In May of 2021, the ACNA released a [position statement](#) on work-place drug testing for nurses. In the statement, the ACNA stated that "drug-testing via urine is not a reliable source for determining impairment due to cannabis use. THC is stored in the fatty tissue and is known to remain in the body for at least 30 days¹. Research has been unable to determine with certainty the length of time THC remains detectable in chronic and heavy users². The concentration, amount, and route of administration can all impact impairment³. Therefore, urine drug-testing is inappropriate for testing impairment." The position statement's purpose was to establish ACNA's position regarding pre-employment, random drug-testing, and suspicion of intoxication practices and to employ more reliable methods of testing for impairment.

"Testing positive for THC doesn't mean anything other than it is in her system" stated the current ACNA president Eloise Theisen, NP, AGPCNP-BC. "It is absolutely ridiculous that we are still testing athletes for THC when we have 36 states, plus the District of Columbia with medical cannabis laws and 18 states, plus D.C. that allow for adult use. The USADA's

¹ Howard, J, Choosewood, L.C., Jackson-Lee, L., & Osborne, J.,(2020, June 15). Cannabis and Work: Implications, Impairment, and the Need for Further Research. Retrieved Feb 4, 2021 from CDC website: <https://blogs.cdc.gov/niosh-science-blog/2020/06/15/cannabis-and-work/>

² Cary, P. L., (n.d.). The Marijuana Detection Window: Determining the Length of Time Cannabinoids will Remain Detectable in the Urine Following Smoking. A Critical Review of Relevant Research and Cannabinoid Detection Guidance for Drug Courts. Retrieved May 3rd, 2021 from <https://www.ndci.org/>

³ Grabenauer, M. (2020, March 31). Differences in cannabis impairment and its measurement due to route of administration. Retrieved February 4, 2021, from ojp.gov website: <https://www.ncj rs.gov/pdffiles1/nijgrants/255884.pdf>

antiquated stance on cannabis use is apparent in their July 2nd [statement](#) on Sha'Carri's acceptance of a one month suspension. Classifying THC as a drug of abuse and requiring an athlete to complete a substance of abuse treatment program demonstrates that their policies are based on fear and stigma rather than science", Eloise Theisen goes on to say.

While the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) has changed their stance on CBD, THC is still a prohibited substance on the list. There are currently no restrictions for the use of CBD in athletes. However if an athlete wants to use THC, they can apply for a Therapeutic Use Exemption (TUE). WADA will consider a TUE application for medical marijuana per the [WADA TUE Physician Guidelines for Neuropathic Pain](#). According to the guidelines, Sha'Carri would not have qualified for a TUE and therefore would not be eligible. "It comes down to freedom of choice. Sha'Carri does not owe anyone an apology for using a legal substance that she found helpful in dealing with the loss of her biological mother. Studies have suggested that cannabinoids have been effective in improving sleep, anxiety, hyperarousal and fear related behaviors that are often associated with traumatic events like the loss of a loved one", Eloise Theisen stated.

The ACNA would like to see organizations such as WADA and USADA update their policies to accurately reflect the current science. Cannabinoids can be effective in the treatment of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which can occur after exposure to a traumatic event. The ACNA wrote a [resolution](#) on PTSD in May 2020 calling on the Nation's governing bodies to acknowledge the importance of passage of legislation that qualifies PTSD for medical cannabis in all states.