



# Psilocybin Facilitator Training Programs in Oregon

## An Inside Look at Oregon's Burgeoning Psychedelic Marketplace

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### Conflict of Interest Disclosure

*Jon Dennis is the executive director and a co-owner of the Vital Oregon facilitator training program, and this article is about Oregon facilitator training programs.*

**In January, Oregon will begin** accepting licensing applications for a new class of psychedelic professional, called a “psilocybin services facilitator.” The facilitator will play perhaps the most crucial role in the administration of Oregon’s new psilocybin program: ensuring client safety. To do this, facilitators will be tasked with screening clients for contraindications, preparing clients for the psilocybin experience, advising on and approving of the amount of psilocybin to be consumed, providing supervision and support during the psilocybin session, and offering integration services after the psilocybin experience to help participants catalyze positive life changes. They will also provide referrals to professionals in other disciplines when clients may benefit from other professional help. With all these responsibilities, Oregon is relying heavily on facilitators to ensure that its psilocybin program is run safely and responsibly.

Oregon’s psilocybin program, known as [Measure 109 \(M109\)](#),<sup>1</sup> is not a medical or mental health program. On the contrary, adults 21 years of age will be permitted to take psilocybin for [virtually any reason](#).<sup>2</sup> The facilitators who will run the program

<sup>1</sup> *State of Oregon: Oregon secretary of State – Home. Measure 109 Language. (2019). Retrieved August 22, 2022, from <https://sos.oregon.gov/admin/Documents/irr/2020/034text.pdf>*

<sup>2</sup> Marks, M. (2021, December 17). *Warning: Oregon legalized supported adult use of psilocybin, not psychedelic therapy.* Chacruna. Retrieved August 30, 2022, from <https://chacruna.net/oregon-legalized-psilocybin-supported-adult-use/>

will normally not be medical or mental health professionals. In fact, there are only two educational requirements in order to become a facilitator in the Oregon system: holding a high school diploma or GED and graduating from a state-approved facilitator training program. This means Oregon is also relying heavily on facilitator training programs to implement the M109 program safely and responsibly.

Last May, the [Oregon Health Authority \(OHA\)](#)<sup>3</sup> adopted its final rules for the initial facilitator training requirements. In brief, the facilitators must successfully complete a program that is no less than 160 hours. 40 of those hours must be an in-person practicum in which students have the opportunity to “facilitate and observe the facilitation of non-ordinary states of consciousness.” The remaining 120 hours may be offered entirely online and must cover a range of topics, including safety, ethics, pharmacology, core facilitation skills, and cultural equity in relation to psilocybin. Programs must maintain a level of training for students such that graduates “could reasonably expect to possess the knowledge and skills required to practice as a facilitator.” At the end of the program, the director or a lead instructor must endorse each graduating student as “qualified to provide psilocybin services.”

Because M109 allows people to take psilocybin for virtually any reason, there is considerable speculation about what “psilocybin services” in Oregon will actually look like. They might look medical, therapeutic, recreational, religious, or anything in-between. They might look like nature retreats or wellness spas or ceremonial gatherings. They might even look like microdosing-friendly office spaces. Oregon hasn’t published most of the M109 regulations yet, but it appears to some observers that the types of psilocybin services that will be available in Oregon might accurately reflect the wide and varied motivations that people have for taking psilocybin. These conditions are predictive of a niche psilocybin marketplace in which psilocybin facilitation and facilitator training programs assume many different forms.

Last June, the Oregon Health Authority began accepting applications from training programs who wish to become approved by the state. As of July 21, 2022, OHA has approved 8 different training programs, and at least 4 other programs are known to be working through the application process. These programs reflect some of the diversity within the rapidly-expanding psychedelic culture. They also reflect varying philosophies and approaches to psychedelic experience.

Some Oregon training programs require their students to have advanced medical or therapeutic degrees. Others are proud to have previously-underground practitioners on their teaching staff. Tuition for most schools is around \$8,000-\$9,000 with outliers in both directions. At least 2 are nonprofits. Many programs celebrate diversity and seek inclusion of marginalized populations. Several discuss the intersection of Indigenous wisdom with modern clinical research. Generally, schools tend to focus on healing, wellness, personal growth, and safety. Nearly every program’s website discusses the spiritual dimensions of working with psilocybin.

[Earth Medicine Center](#)<sup>4</sup> has a shamanic character. It partners with an Indigenous plant medicine community in Colombia and teaches from “an ecological perspective.” [The Alma Institute](#)<sup>5</sup> is a nonprofit that is fiscally-sponsored by MAPS. Its mission is “to strengthen and diversify the network” of facilitators “by offering prioritized enrollment and certification opportunities to members of marginalized and low-income communities.” Another nonprofit, the [Synaptic Care Institute](#),<sup>6</sup> is also dedicated to diversity in the psychedelic ecosystem and roots its program “in holism, wisdom, and science.” The mission of [InnerTrek](#),<sup>7</sup> the program started by the co-chief petitioner of M109 Tom Eckert, is “to spark healing and wholeness through Oregon’s newly legal psilocybin therapy and wellness framework.” [Fluence](#)<sup>8</sup> focuses on training licensed mental health practitioners and offers a Postgraduate Certificate in Psilocybin-assisted Therapy. [Subtle Winds](#)<sup>9</sup> uses “an integrative humanistic approach” and highlights its team’s decades of hand-on harm-reduction work at music festivals and other events. [SoundMind](#)<sup>10</sup> combines medicinal approaches to psilocybin with ceremonial and traditional approaches, and requires teachers to be centered in anti-racism and anti-oppression.

<sup>4</sup> [Earth Medicine Center – Psilocybin Education](#). (n.d.). Retrieved August 22, 2022, from <https://www.earthmedicinecenter.com/>

<sup>5</sup> [Psychedelic facilitator training in alignment with Oregon Measure 109: The Psilocybin Services Act](#). ALMA INSTITUTE. (n.d.). Retrieved August 22, 2022, from <https://www.almatraining.org/>

<sup>6</sup> [Home](#). Synaptic. (n.d.). Retrieved August 22, 2022, from <https://www.synaptic.care/>

<sup>7</sup> [Innertrek facilitator training](#). InnerTrek Facilitator Training. (n.d.). Retrieved August 22, 2022, from <https://www.innertrek.org/>

<sup>8</sup> [Psilocybin-assisted therapy](#). Fluence. (2022, July 27). Retrieved August 22, 2022, from <https://www.fluencetraining.com/>

<sup>9</sup> [Home—subtle winds](#). Home—Subtle Winds. (n.d.). Retrieved August 30, 2022, from <https://www.subtlewinds.com/>

<sup>10</sup> [Soundmind Institute](#). SoundMind Institute. (n.d.). Retrieved August 22, 2022, from <https://soundmind.center/>

<sup>3</sup> [Oregon Psilocybin Services](#). Oregon Health Authority : Oregon Psilocybin Services : Prevention and Wellness : State of Oregon. (2022). Retrieved August 22, 2022, from <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PREVENTIONWELLNESS/Pages/Oregon-Psilocybin-Services.aspx>



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Jon is the chief architect of the proposed regulatory framework for protecting community and religious use of psilocybin under Oregon's psilocybin program. He has presented to multiple subcommittees of the Oregon Psilocybin Advisory Board in support of religious and spiritual freedoms and a community access model for psychedelic services. Previously, Jon worked as a civil litigator and managed a nonprofit law office giving free legal assistance to people living in poverty. Jon has a BA in Religious Studies and practices law in Ontario, Oregon.

**Vital Oregon**,<sup>11</sup> the training program from the Psychedelics Today team (and, full disclosure, the program I'm involved with) aims to provide exceptional and affordable training for a niche marketplace in a way that advances psychedelic community and culture. Even **UC Berkeley**<sup>12</sup> has announced that it's going to have an Oregon training program that will emphasize "psilocybin facilitation and its applications for spiritual and psychotherapeutic care." Michael Pollan serves on its leadership team.

Facilitator training programs are regulated both by the Oregon Health Authority and by the **Oregon Higher Education Coordinating Commission**.<sup>13</sup> Some of the smaller, nonprofit, and more mission-driven training programs have expressed concern that the weight of the regulatory burdens—and in particular the regulatory compliance ordinarily required of private career schools—may cause their programs to no longer be financially feasible. This should be cause for alarm because the prevalence of smaller training programs contributes to the cultural diversity and cultural equity of this fledgling system, which is already facing considerable diversity and equity challenges.

The Oregon Health Authority and its **Psilocybin Advisory Board**<sup>14</sup> worked for 16 months to identify and establish standard minimum training criteria that they expect will create safety and equity in the world's first regulated adult-use psychedelic services program. How that training looks once reflected through the diverging currents of a consumer-driven psychedelic marketplace might provide some clues to where this "renaissance" is headed.

<sup>11</sup> Vital. Vital Psychedelic Training Oregon. (n.d.). Retrieved August 22, 2022, from <https://www.vitalpsychedelicttraining.com/oregon>

<sup>12</sup> Anwar, Y. (2020, September 16). *UC Berkeley launches New Center for Psychedelic Science and Education*. Berkeley News. Retrieved August 18, 2022, from <https://news.berkeley.edu/2020/09/14/uc-berkeley-launches-new-center-for-psychedelic-science-and-education/>

<sup>13</sup> Higher Education Coordinating Commission. State of Oregon: Higher Education Coordinating Commission—Home. (n.d.). Retrieved August 22, 2022, from <https://www.oregon.gov/highered/Pages/index.aspx>

<sup>14</sup> Oregon Psilocybin Advisory Board. Oregon Health Authority : Oregon Psilocybin Advisory Board : Prevention and Wellness : State of Oregon. (2021). Retrieved August 24, 2022, from <https://www.oregon.gov/oha/PH/PREVENTIONWELLNESS/Pages/Psilocybin-Advisory-Board-Meetings.aspx#>: