

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE BULLETIN

ISSUE DATE

July 27, 2009

EFFECTIVE DATE

August 3, 2009

NUMBER

*See Below

SUBJECT

Prior Authorization of Benzodiazepines – Pharmacy Services

BY



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PURPOSE:

The purpose of this bulletin is to:

1. Inform providers that the Department of Public Welfare (Department) will require prior authorization of prescriptions for Benzodiazepine medications when prescribed for a child under 21 years of age and when a recipient has a concurrent prescription for Suboxone or Subutex.
2. Issue new and updated handbook pages that include the type of information needed to evaluate requests for Benzodiazepine medications for medical necessity.

SCOPE:

This bulletin applies to all licensed pharmacies and prescribers enrolled in the Medical Assistance (MA) Program and providing services in the fee-for-service (FFS) delivery system, including pharmacy services to residents of long term care facilities.

BACKGROUND:

The Department's Drug Utilization Review (DUR) Board meets semi-annually to review provider prescribing and dispensing practices for efficacy, safety, and quality and to recommend interventions for prescribers and pharmacists through the Department's Prospective Drug Use Review (ProDUR) and Retrospective Drug Use Review (RetroDUR) programs.

01-09-31	09-09-32	27-09-29
02-09-28	11-09-28	30-09-28
03-09-28	14-09-28	31-09-33
08-09-32	24-09-31	32-09-28

COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS REGARDING THIS BULLETIN SHOULD BE DIRECTED TO:

The appropriate toll free number for your provider type

Visit the Office of Medical Assistance Programs Web site at www.dpw.state.pa.us/omap

During the December 3, 2008 meeting of the DUR board, the Board recommended that the Department require prior authorization of prescriptions for Benzodiazepines when prescribed for children under 21 years of age, and when prescribed for recipients who have a concurrent prescription for Suboxone or Subutex, for health and safety reasons. The proposed guidelines to determine medical necessity of Benzodiazepines for children under 21 years of age were subject to public review and comment and were subsequently approved by the Department.

DISCUSSION:

Effective August 3, 2009, prescriptions for Benzodiazepines for children under 21 years of age and for recipients who have a concurrent prescription for Suboxone or Subutex will require prior authorization.

PROCEDURE:

The procedures for prescribers to request prior authorization of prescriptions for Benzodiazepines and for pharmacies to dispense an emergency supply of medication when necessary and without prior authorization are located in SECTION I of the Prior Authorization of Pharmaceutical Services Handbook. The Department will take into account the elements specified in the clinical review guidelines (which are included in the provider handbook pages in the SECTION II chapters related to specific therapeutic classes of drugs) in reviewing the prior authorization request to determine medical necessity.

The requirements for prior authorization and clinical review guidelines to determine medical necessity of a Benzodiazepine and updated handbook chapters are included in the attached updated provider handbook pages.

As set forth in 55 Pa. Code § 1101.67(a), the procedures described in the handbook pages must be followed to ensure appropriate and timely processing of prior authorization requests for drugs that require prior authorization.

ATTACHMENTS:

Prior Authorization of Pharmaceutical Services Handbook - Updated pages

SECTION II
Benzodiazepines