IMPORTANT REMINDER: All providers must revalidate the Medical Assistance (MA) enrollment of each service location every 5 years. Providers should log into PROMISe to check the revalidation dates of each service location and submit revalidation applications at least 60 days prior to the revalidation dates. Enrollment (revalidation) applications may be found at: https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Providers/Pages/PROMISe-Enrollment.aspx.

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this bulletin is to issue updated handbook pages that include the requirements for prior authorization and the type of information needed to evaluate the medical necessity of prescriptions for Opioid Dependence Treatments submitted for prior authorization.

SCOPE:

This bulletin applies to all licensed pharmacies and prescribers enrolled in the Medical Assistance (MA) Program. The guidelines to determine the medical necessity of Opioid Dependence Treatments will be utilized in the fee-for-service delivery system and by the MA managed care organizations (MCOs) in Physical Health HealthChoices and Community HealthChoices. Providers rendering services in the MA managed care delivery system should address any questions related to the prior authorization of Opioid Dependence Treatments to the appropriate managed care organization.

*01-20-38  09-20-37  27-20-33  33-20-34
02-20-31  11-20-31  30-20-30
03-20-31  14-20-32  31-20-38
08-20-41  24-20-31  32-20-30

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 website at https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Providers/Pages/Health%20Care%20for%20Providers/Contact-Information-for-Providers.aspx.
BACKGROUND:

The Department of Human Services’ (Department) Pharmacy and Therapeutics (P&T) Committee reviews published peer-reviewed clinical literature and recommends the following:

- Preferred or non-preferred status for new drugs in therapeutic classes already included in the Preferred Drug List (PDL);
- Changes in the status of drugs on the PDL from preferred to non-preferred and non-preferred to preferred;
- New quantity limits;
- Classes of drugs to be added to or deleted from the PDL; and
- New guidelines or revisions to existing guidelines to evaluate the medical necessity of prescriptions submitted for prior authorization.

DISCUSSION:

During the August 12, 2020, meeting, the P&T Committee recommended the following revisions to the guidelines to determine medical necessity of Opioid Dependence Treatments:

- Removal of the prior authorization requirement for an oral buprenorphine Opioid Dependence Treatment when used in combination with a benzodiazepine or central nervous system depressant;
- Clarification of agents in other PDL classes that require prior authorization when a beneficiary has a concurrent prescription for a buprenorphine Opioid Dependence Treatment;
- Revision of the guidelines for an oral buprenorphine Opioid Dependence Treatment that does not contain naloxone to account for a contraindication to or intolerance of naloxone;
- Removal of the prior authorization requirement for preferred non-oral buprenorphine Opioid Dependence Treatments and addition of a guideline specific to non-preferred non-oral Opioid Dependence Treatments; and
- Revision to the guidelines to determine medical necessity of requests for prescriptions that exceed a dose of 24 mg per day of buprenorphine.

The revisions to the guidelines to determine medical necessity of Opioid Dependence Treatments, as recommended by the P&T Committee, were subject to public review and comment and subsequently approved for implementation by the Department.

PROCEDURE:

The procedures for prescribers to request prior authorization of Opioid Dependence Treatments 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 chapter
related to Opioid Dependence Treatments) when reviewing the prior authorization request to determine medical necessity.

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

**RESOURCES:**

Prior Authorization of Pharmaceutical Services Handbook – SECTION I
Pharmacy Prior Authorization General Requirements
[https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Pharmacy-Services/Pages/Pharmacy-Prior-Authorization-General-Requirements.aspx](https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Pharmacy-Services/Pages/Pharmacy-Prior-Authorization-General-Requirements.aspx)

Prior Authorization of Pharmaceutical Services Handbook – SECTION II
Pharmacy Prior Authorization Guidelines
[https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Pharmacy-Services/Pages/Clinical-Guidelines.aspx](https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Pharmacy-Services/Pages/Clinical-Guidelines.aspx)
I. Requirements for Prior Authorization of Opioid Dependence Treatments

A. Prescriptions That Require Prior Authorization

Prescriptions for Opioid Dependence Treatments that meet any of the following conditions must be prior authorized:

1. An oral buprenorphine Opioid Dependence Treatment without naloxone.

2. A non-preferred Opioid Dependence Treatment. See the Preferred Drug List (PDL) for the list of preferred Opioid Dependence Treatments at: https://papdl.com/preferred-drug-list.

3. An Opioid Dependence Treatment with a prescribed quantity that exceeds the quantity limit. The list of drugs that are subject to quantity limits, with accompanying quantity limits, is available at: https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Pharmacy-Services/Pages/Quantity-Limits-and-Daily-Dose-Limits.aspx.

REMINDER: A prescription for a benzodiazepine, opioid analgesic, controlled substance sedative hypnotic, or carisoprodol requires prior authorization when a beneficiary has a concurrent prescription for a buprenorphine Opioid Dependence Treatment. Refer to the specific individual handbook chapters (e.g., Analgesics, Opioid Long-Acting, Analgesics, Opioid Short-Acting, Anticonvulsants, Anxiolytics, Skeletal Muscle Relaxants, Sedative Hypnotics) for corresponding prior authorization guidelines.

REMINDER: A prescription for an opioid analgesic requires prior authorization when a beneficiary has a concurrent prescription for Vivitrol.

B. Review of Documentation for Medical Necessity

In evaluating a request for prior authorization of a prescription for an Opioid Dependence Treatment, the determination of whether the requested prescription is medically necessary will take into account whether the beneficiary:

1. Is prescribed the Opioid Dependence Treatment for treatment of a diagnosis that is indicated in the U.S. Food and Drug Administration-approved package labeling OR a medically accepted indication; AND

2. For an oral buprenorphine Opioid Dependence Treatment that does not contain naloxone, one of the following:
   a. Is prescribed the agent for induction therapy,
   b. Is pregnant,
   c. Is breastfeeding,
   d. Has a history of contraindication or intolerance to naloxone;
3. For a non-preferred Opioid Dependence Treatment, **one** of the following:
   
a. For an oral buprenorphine Opioid Dependence Treatment, has a history of therapeutic failure, contraindication, or intolerance of the preferred oral buprenorphine Opioid Dependence Treatments,
   
b. For an alpha-2 adrenergic agonist Opioid Dependence Treatment, has a history of therapeutic failure, contraindication, or intolerance of the preferred alpha-2 adrenergic agonist Opioid Dependence Treatments,
   
c. For a non-oral buprenorphine Opioid Dependence Treatment, has a history of therapeutic failure, contraindication, or intolerance of the preferred non-oral buprenorphine Opioid Dependence Treatments;

4. Has documentation that the prescriber or the prescriber’s delegate conducted a search of the Pennsylvania Prescription Drug Monitoring Program for the beneficiary’s controlled substance prescription history; **AND**

5. If a prescription for an Opioid Dependence Treatment is for a quantity that exceeds the quantity limit, the determination of whether the prescription is medically necessary will also take into account the guidelines set forth in the Quantity Limits Chapter; **AND**

6. If a prescription for an oral buprenorphine Opioid Dependence Treatment is for a daily dose that exceeds 24 mg/day, **all** of the following:

   a. Whether the beneficiary is prescribed a daily dose consistent with medically accepted prescribing practices and standards of care,

   b. Whether the beneficiary has documentation of an evaluation to determine the recommended level of care,

   c. Whether the beneficiary has documentation of participation in a substance abuse or behavioral health counseling or treatment program or an addictions recovery program,

   d. Whether the beneficiary has a recent urine drug screen for drugs with the potential for abuse,

   e. For a beneficiary already established on buprenorphine, whether the beneficiary has a recent urine drug screen that is positive for buprenorphine and norbuprenorphine.

**NOTE:** If the beneficiary does not meet the clinical review guidelines and quantity limit guidelines listed above but, in the professional judgment of the physician reviewer, the services are medically necessary to meet the medical needs of the beneficiary, the
MEDICAL ASSISTANCE HANDBOOK
PRIOR AUTHORIZATION OF PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES

request for prior authorization will be approved.

C. Clinical Review Process

Prior authorization personnel will review the request for prior authorization and apply the clinical guidelines in Section B. above to assess the medical necessity of a prescription for an Opioid Dependence Treatment. If the guidelines in Section B. are met, the reviewer will prior authorize the prescription. If the guidelines are not met, the prior authorization request will be referred to a physician reviewer for a medical necessity determination. Such a request for prior authorization will be approved when, in the professional judgment of the physician reviewer, the services are medically necessary to meet the medical needs of the beneficiary.

D. 5-Day Supply

The Department will cover a 5-day supply of the prescribed oral Opioid Dependence Treatment without prior authorization if, in the professional judgment of the dispensing pharmacist, the beneficiary has an immediate need for the medication, unless the dispensing pharmacist determines that taking the medication either alone or along with other medications that the beneficiary may be taking would jeopardize the health and safety of the beneficiary. The maximum number of 5-day supplies of a prescription for an oral Opioid Dependence Treatment that the Department will cover without prior authorization is one 5-day supply per beneficiary during a 6-month period.

The Department does not consider a delay in the receipt of a buprenorphine implant or injection to present an immediate need and, therefore, will not cover 5-day supplies of a buprenorphine implant or injection pending approval of a request for prior authorization.

E. References


January 5, 2021
(Replacing January 13, 2020)
11. CSAT’s TIP 42: Substance Abuse Treatment for Persons With Co-Occurring Disorders; 2005.