

Managed Care Operations Memorandum
General Operations
MCOPS Memo # 06/2023-008

Date: June 29, 2023

Subject: Prior Authorization of Opioids

To: All Physical Health HealthChoices Managed Care Organizations (PH-MCOs)

From: Gwendolyn Zander, Director, Bureau of Managed Care Operations, Office of Medical Assistance Programs

Purpose:

To update requirements for prior authorization of opioids.

Background:

In 2020, Pennsylvania's Medical Assistance (MA) program implemented a statewide Preferred Drug List (PDL), which applies to all PH-MCOs and the MA Fee For Service Program. The PDL includes the Analgesics, Opioid Short-Acting, Analgesics, Opioid Long-Acting, and Opioid Use Disorder Treatments drug classes. The prior authorization guidelines for these drug classes are standardized across PH-MCOs through the PDL.

The Substance Use-Disorder Prevention that Promotes Opioid Recovery and Treatment for Patients and Communities Act (SUPPORT Act), which became Public Law 115-271 in October 2018, requires that states must set prospective safety edits on maximum morphine milligram equivalents (MME) that can be prescribed to an individual for treatment of chronic pain and a claims review automated process that indicates when an individual is prescribed the morphine equivalent for such treatment in excess of the maximum MME dose limitation identified by the state. This safety edit must include a MME threshold amount to meet the statutory requirement, which may assist in identifying patients at potentially high clinical risk who may benefit from closer monitoring and care coordination.

Discussion:

In order to comply with the SUPPORT Act, PH-MCOs must continue to require prior authorization for opioids with doses exceeding 50 MMEs per day. PH-MCOs must also continue to follow the statewide PDL prior authorization guidelines.

Next Steps:

PH-MCOs must review their prior authorization policies and point of sale system edits to ensure that they comply with this MC OPS memo. If revisions are required, PH-MCOs should submit revised policies for Department review and approval within 60 days of the effective date of this MC OPS memo.

Obsolete:

This MC OPS memo replaces the previously issued MC OPS memo #03/2018-003 and will remain in effect until it is superseded.