


ISSUE DATE November 8, 2023	EFFECTIVE DATE January 8, 2024	NUMBER *See below
SUBJECT Prior Authorization of Anxiolytics – Pharmacy Services		BY  Sally A. Kozak, Deputy Secretary Office of Medical Assistance Programs

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 Anxiolytics 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 Anxiolytics will be utilized in the fee-for-service and managed care delivery systems. Providers rendering services to MA beneficiaries in the managed care delivery system should address any questions related to the prior authorization of Anxiolytics to the appropriate managed care organization.

BACKGROUND:

*01-23-34	09-23-33	27-23-24	33-23-31
02-23-22	11-23-22	30-23-25	
03-23-20	14-23-21	31-23-35	
08-23-37	24-23-30	32-23-20	

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>.

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

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

DISCUSSION:

During the September 12, 2023, meeting, the P&T Committee recommended the following revisions to the guidelines to determine medical necessity of Anxiolytics:

- Addition of guidelines for an Anxiolytic benzodiazepine for a beneficiary under 21 years of age for the treatment of severe acute anxiety.
- Addition of a Dose and Duration of Therapy section.
- Deletion of the guidelines related to documentation that the prescriber or prescriber's delegate conducted a search of the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program.

The revisions to the guidelines to determine medical necessity of prescriptions for Anxiolytics submitted for prior authorization 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 Anxiolytics 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 Anxiolytics) 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 and products 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>

Prior Authorization of Pharmaceutical Services Handbook – SECTION II
Pharmacy Prior Authorization Guidelines

<https://www.dhs.pa.gov/providers/Pharmacy-Services/Pages/Clinical-Guidelines.aspx>

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE HANDBOOK
PRIOR AUTHORIZATION OF PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES

I. Requirements for Prior Authorization of Anxiolytics

A. Prescriptions That Require Prior Authorization

Prescriptions for Anxiolytics that meet any of the following conditions must be prior authorized:

1. A non-preferred Anxiolytic. See the Preferred Drug List (PDL) for the list of preferred Anxiolytics at: <https://papdl.com/preferred-drug-list>.
2. An Anxiolytic 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>.
3. An Anxiolytic benzodiazepine when there is a record of a recent paid claim for another benzodiazepine (excluding clobazam and benzodiazepines indicated for the acute treatment of increased seizure activity [e.g., rectal and nasal formulations]) in the Point-of-Sale Online Claims Adjudication System (therapeutic duplication).
4. An Anxiolytic benzodiazepine when there is a record of 2 or more paid claims for any benzodiazepine (excluding clobazam and benzodiazepines indicated for the acute treatment of increased seizure activity [e.g., rectal and nasal formulations]) in the Point-of-Sale Online Claims Adjudication System within the past 30 days.
5. An Anxiolytic benzodiazepine when prescribed for a beneficiary under 21 years of age.
6. An Anxiolytic benzodiazepine when a beneficiary has a concurrent prescription for a buprenorphine agent indicated for the treatment of opioid use disorder.

B. Review of Documentation for Medical Necessity

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

1. For an Anxiolytic benzodiazepine for a beneficiary under 21 years of age, **one** of the following:
 - a. Has a diagnosis of **one** of the following:
 - i. Seizure disorder,
 - ii. Chemotherapy induced nausea and vomiting,
 - iii. Cerebral palsy,
 - iv. Spastic disorder,
 - v. Dystonia,
 - vi. Catatonia,

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE HANDBOOK
PRIOR AUTHORIZATION OF PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES

- b. Has symptoms of severe acute anxiety and **both** of the following:
 - i. Has chart documented evidence of a comprehensive evaluation
 - ii. Is prescribed the Anxiolytic benzodiazepine by or in consultation with a psychiatrist,
- c. Is receiving palliative care;

AND

- 2. For an Anxiolytic benzodiazepine for a beneficiary with a concurrent prescription for a buprenorphine agent indicated for the treatment of opioid use disorder, **both** of the following:
 - a. Is prescribed the buprenorphine agent and the benzodiazepine by the same prescriber or, if prescribed by different prescribers, all prescribers are aware of the other prescription(s)
 - b. Has an acute need for therapy with the benzodiazepine;

AND

- 3. For therapeutic duplication of a benzodiazepine, **one** of the following:
 - a. Is being titrated to or tapered from another benzodiazepine
 - b. Has a medical reason for concomitant use of the requested medications that is supported by peer-reviewed medical literature or national treatment guidelines;

AND

- 4. When there is a record of 2 or more paid claims for a benzodiazepine within the past 30 days, **both** of the following:
 - a. The multiple prescriptions are consistent with medically accepted prescribing practices and standards of care, including support from peer-reviewed medical literature or national treatment guidelines
 - b. The multiple prescriptions are written by the same prescriber or, if written by different prescribers, all prescribers are aware of the other prescription(s);

AND

- 5. For a non-preferred Anxiolytic, has a history of therapeutic failure of or a contraindication or an intolerance to the preferred Anxiolytics; **AND**
- 6. If a prescription for an Anxiolytic 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.

MEDICAL ASSISTANCE HANDBOOK
PRIOR AUTHORIZATION OF PHARMACEUTICAL SERVICES

NOTE: If the beneficiary does not meet the clinical review 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 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 Anxiolytic. 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. Dose and Duration of Therapy

Requests for prior authorization of an Anxiolytic benzodiazepine for a beneficiary under 21 years of age for symptoms of severe acute anxiety will be approved for up to 2 weeks.

E. References

1. Leonte, K.G, et.al. Pharmacotherapy for anxiety disorders in children and adolescents. Up To Date. Accessed 7/25/23