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Name
Address
City, State
Phone Number

Instructions

The following letter was developed by the California Department of Public Health in March 2017 and contains guidance for prescribers in addressing prescription opioids with their patients. We recommend reviewing the letter, adjusting it to reflect additional guidance and resources your health plan offers, and providing a health plan point of contact who can assist and provide additional information as needed.

Insert Date

Insert Name

Insert Address

Dear Health Care Provider/Prescriber:

As you are aware, the overuse of prescription opioids has become a national epidemic. I am contacting you to offer resources to assist you in addressing this critical issue with your patients, including:

- [Strategies for assisting high-risk patients](#)
- [Medication-assisted treatment certification programs](#)
- [Local addiction recovery services locator](#)
- [Information about CURES \(California's prescription drug monitoring program\)](#)
- [Opioid prescribing guidelines](#)
- [Opioid prescriber resource sheet](#)

Please see the sections below for brief descriptions of each topic and links to resources. These resources are being made available by the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), Safe and Active Communities Branch, and we highly encourage you to make use of them. If you have any questions, please contact **XXXX, Title** for assistance. You may also contact the CDPH Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention Program at PDOP@cdph.ca.gov and 916.552.9800.

Sincerely,

Insert Name

Insert Logo

Page 2

Strategies for assisting high-risk patients

Don't "Fire" Your Patients Who May Be Overusing Opioids

Providing safe and effective pain management can be challenging, and there are multiple complexities to consider when treating patients with acute and chronic pain. One of the most difficult situations for prescribers may be how to respond to patients with difficulty decreasing opioid intake or with other possible addiction symptoms. It is our hope that these resources can help you maintain your clinical relationship with your patients who are using opioid medications and improve their overall well-being. These patients may need your assistance more than ever.

Clinician Tools for Assisting Patients on Opioids

Patients on high doses of opioids are at increased risk of overdose and diminishing function. Tapering a patient from higher opioid doses can be an important first step to reducing overdose risk and improving function. It is also helpful to maintain ongoing communication with your patient about your concern for their well-being and your commitment to safe prescribing. A variety of tools are available on the prescriber resource sheet (link below) including a tapering pocket guide, telephone consultation services, an opioid overdose toolkit, and more.

Resources

[CDC — Guideline Resources: Clinical Tools](#) (opioid prescribing guidelines mobile app, checklist, nonopioid treatments, assessing benefits and harm, calculating dosage, and more!)

[CDC — Tapering Pocket Guide](#) (PDF)

[UCSF — Clinician Consultation Center](#) (clinician-to-clinician telephone consultations) or by phone at 855.300.3595 from 7 AM to 3 PM (PT) on weekdays.

[Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\) — Medication-Assisted Treatment of Opioid Use Disorder Pocket Guide](#)

[SAMHSA — Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit](#)

[California Society of Addiction Medicine — Resources for Primary Care Physicians](#) (Screening, Brief Intervention, and Referral to Treatment; screening tools; naloxone resources; and more)

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Insert Logo

Page 3

Medication-Assisted Treatment

When addiction is confirmed, the use of medication-assisted treatment (MAT), such as buprenorphine has proven highly effective in lowering overdose risk and increasing patient retention in treatment. It has also been associated with decreases in the transmission of HIV and hepatitis C among people with opioid use disorders. If you are not already certified to prescribe buprenorphine, consider obtaining a certification. There are several online MAT training programs available for prescribers.

Resources

[American Society of Addiction Medicine](#)

[California Health Care Foundation — Opioid Safety Page](#)

[SAMHSA — MAT Certification and Training Programs](#)

[SAMHSA — MAT Training Materials and Resources](#)

[American Osteopathic Academy of Addiction Medicine — Clinical Tools](#)

[UC Davis Center for Advancing Pain Relief — ECHO Pain Management TeleMentoring](#)

Local addiction recovery services locator

If you are unable to provide medication-assisted treatment yourself, refer patients to an opioid treatment program or other drug recovery program within your community. Access to more information about local addiction recovery services is readily available.

Resources

[National Alliance of Advocates for Buprenorphine Treatment — Patient/Provider Matching System](#)

[SAMHSA — Opioid Treatment Program Directory by State](#)

[SAMHSA — Buprenorphine Treatment Physician Locator](#)

[SAMHSA — Behavioral Health Treatment Services Locator](#)

Prescription Drug Monitoring Program — CURES

An important tool for identifying patients at risk is the Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System (CURES). CURES can be accessed relatively easily, and checking CURES for each new patient, and every four months thereafter, will soon be required by law.

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Page 4

Resource

[Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System \(CURES\)](#)

Prescribing Guidelines for Opioids and Controlled Substance for Pain

Both the Medical Board of California (MBC) and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) guidelines provide information about best practices for prescribing opioids and options for nonpharmacological treatment of pain symptoms, along with recommendations for those patients presenting with symptoms of addiction. Abbreviated versions of these guidelines are also available.

Resources

[CDC — Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain \(PDF\)](#)

[MBC — Guidelines for Prescribing Controlled Substances for Pain \(PDF\)](#)

[CDPH — Prescribing Guidelines Comparison \(PDF\)](#)

Health care prescribers are essential partners in ending this epidemic. Working together, we want to ensure that California prescribers have access to resources and support to help improve patient pain management while avoiding opioid overdose and addiction. Thank you for providing quality medical care to your patients in need of effective pain management.

Related Publications

[SAMHSA — Clinical Guidelines for the Use of Buprenorphine in the Treatment of Opioid Addiction](#)

[SAMHSA — Medication-Assisted Treatment for Opioid Addiction in Opioid Treatment Programs](#)

[CHCF — Changing Course: The Role of Health Plans in Curbing the Opioid Epidemic](#)

[CHCF — Case Studies: Three California Health Plans Take Action Against Opioid Overuse \(PDF\)](#)

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Insert Logo

Page 5

[Partnership HealthPlan of California — Managing Pain Safely: Multiple Interventions to Dramatically Reduce Opioid Overuse](#)

Opioid Overdose Prevention Websites

[CDPH — Statewide Opioid Safety Workgroup](#)

[CDPH — Prescription Drug Overdose Prevention Initiative](#)

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