

Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS)

Practice Guidelines for the Administration of Buprenorphine for Treating Opioid Use Disorder

Agency: Office of the Secretary, Department of Health and Human Services

Effective Date: April 28, 2021

Summary: Eligible physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, certified registered nurse anesthetists, and certified nurse midwives, who are state licensed and registered by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) to prescribe controlled substances are no longer required to obtain the certification requirements related to training, counseling and other ancillary services under 21U.S.C. 823(g)(2)(B)(i)–(ii) to prescribe buprenorphine for opioid use disorder (OUD) for up to 30 patients at one time. Organizations are still required to submit an application designated as a “Notice of Intent” in order to prescribe buprenorphine for treatment of OUD, however your organization is will not have to certify as to their capacity to provide counseling/ancillary services or certification of training to treat up to 30 patients at any one time. The notification of intent (NOI) must be submitted to SAMHSA before the initial dispensing or prescribing of OUD treatment medication.

Background: Prior to the practice guideline change, physicians were required to take an 8-hour course and practitioners a 24-hour course, to obtain a waiver to prescribe buprenorphine for OUD. Furthermore, the practitioner would have to certify as to their capacity to provide counseling and additional ancillary services. The new practice guidelines remove both of those certification processes from the notice of intent application to SAMHSA for those practitioners who will prescribe to no more than 30 patients at any one time. Removing these two requirements, will decrease barriers to prescribing buprenorphine for OUD, particularly for our Emergency Medicine colleagues, however it will not address the potential lack of comfort or knowledge of incorporating substance use disorder treatment as part of one’s clinical practice. Listed below are available national and local resources for those practitioners who are interested in more training. Technical assistance is also available by request from the clinical team at SUPR/IDHS. Furthermore, although certification of the ability to refer patients to counseling and other ancillary services is no longer required, given the multiple challenges often faced by individuals with substance-use disorder, and evidence that psychosocial treatment may improve outcomes of treatment compliance and retention, practitioners practicing under this exemption are encouraged to provide access to psychosocial services, such as counseling, or other ancillary services, or refer as appropriate to licensed behavioral health practitioners in their communities. Patients can be referred to the Illinois Helpline for Opioids and Other Substances as an additional resource to help connect them to local providers <https://helplineil.org/app/home>

Additional Considerations:

- The exemption applies to practitioners who are state licensed, and DEA registered.
- Time spent practicing under this exemption will not qualify the practitioner for a higher patient limit (i.e., 100 or 275).

- Physician assistants, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, certified registered nurse anesthetists, and certified nurse midwives are required to be supervised by, or work in collaboration with, a DEA registered physician, or under the supervision of, a physician when prescribing medications for the treatment of OUD.
- If a practitioner would like to treat more than 30 patients at any one time, they must seek a waiver under the established protocols of 21 U.S.C. 823(g)(2) including submitting an NOI that includes all of the certifications and qualify for a higher patient limit through the methods outlined. <https://www.samhsa.gov/medication-assisted-treatment/become-buprenorphine-waivered-practitioner>
- This does not apply to the prescribing, dispensing, or the use of Schedule II medications, such as methadone, for the treatment of OUD.

Trainings and Resources:

SAMHSA Notice of Intent - <https://buprenorphine.samhsa.gov/forms/select-practitioner-type.php>

SAMHSA Providers Clinical Support System - <https://pcssnow.org/>

SUPR/IDHS Technical Assistance Request:

DoIT.SUPRHelp <DoIT.SUPRHelp@illinois.gov>

Illinois Patient Resources:

<https://helplineil.org/app/home>

833-234-6343

Text "Help" to 833234