



Reminder: Opioid Safety Edits (implemented January 1, 2019)

Dear Prescriber,

At VNSNY CHOICE Health Plans, our member's safety is our first priority. That's why we're reminding you of an important change that was implemented on January 1, 2019, that may continue to affect your patients.

In order to prevent prescription drug abuse and improve the safety of prescription medications, CMS (Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services), requires all Part D plans to follow opioid safety edits and a Drug Management Program.

We have published details regarding these edits and program on our website. You may access this information by visiting the page for Healthcare Professionals on our website under section titled, 'Provider Toolkit' or by using this link directly:
<https://www.vnsnychoice.org/health-professionals/opioid-safety-edits>.

Below is a **summary** of what you can view on the webpage:

- **Seven-day supply limit for opioid naïve patients (“hard edit”).**
Important Note: This alert should not impact patients who already take opioids.

Medicare Part D patients who have not filled an opioid prescription recently (such as within the past 60 days) will be limited to a supply of 7 days or less.

- **Opioid care coordination alert at 90 morphine milligram equivalent (MME) (known as “soft edit”)**

This policy will affect patients when they present an opioid prescription at the pharmacy and their cumulative MME per day across all of their opioid prescription(s) reaches or exceeds 90 MME – alert triggers if 2 (two) or more prescribers are involved.

- **Safety Alert at 200 MME or more (“hard edit”)**

This policy will affect patients when they present an opioid prescription at the pharmacy and their cumulative MME per day across all of their opioid prescription(s) reaches or exceeds 200 MME – alert triggers if 2 (two) or more prescribers are involved.

- **Concurrent opioid and benzodiazepine use or duplicative long-acting opioid therapy (“soft edits”)**

The alerts will trigger when opioids and benzodiazepines are taken concurrently or if on multiple duplicate long-acting opioids.

- **Concurrent opioid and buprenorphine use (“soft edits”)**

An incoming opioid claim will be stopped if a member has active claims history of buprenorphine for Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT).

- **A Brief overview of the Drug Management Program required by CMS for all Part D plans**

Drug Management Program evaluates beneficiaries based on CMS specified criteria for factors such as concurrent opioids and benzodiazepines use and using multiple pharmacies and providers for these prescription needs. The Drug Management Program is for patients who are considered to be ‘at-risk’ by the plan for prescription drug abuse.

The goal of a DMP is better care coordination for safer use. Coverage limitations under a DMP can include requiring the patient to obtain these medications from a specified prescriber and/or pharmacy, or implementing an individualized POS edit that limits the amount of these medications that will be covered for the patient. The coverage limitation tools may be put in place for 12 months and extended for an additional 12 months (total of 24 months).

Some additional information for your reference:

- On September 18, 2018, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved the Opioid Analgesic REMS Program as one among the many strategies and efforts to reduce the risk of abuse, misuse, addiction, overdose, and deaths due to prescription opioid analgesics.

The REMS program requires that training be made available to all health care providers (HCPs) who are involved in the management of patients with pain, including nurses and pharmacists. To meet this requirement, drug companies with approved opioid analgesics will provide unrestricted grants to accredited continuing education providers for the development of education courses for HCPs based on the FDA’s Opioid Analgesic REMS Education Blueprint for Health Care Providers Involved in the Treatment and Monitoring of Patients with Pain.

We encourage you and your prescribing staff to visit this webpage for more information on how to access the continuing education trainings:
<https://www.fda.gov/drugs/information-drug-class/opioid-medications>.

- **CMS Resources:** 2019 Medicare Part D Opioid Policies – CMS Tip Sheet for Prescribers (enclosed).

To note:

Opioid safety edits and the Drug Management Program are established to provide collaborative care to beneficiaries while keeping their safety in mind. They are not intended as prescribing limits. Prescriber's professional judgement and statements for medical necessity provided in any form of communication and methods by prescribers, will be honored and considered on case management reviews and prior authorization case reviews. This is to ensure beneficiaries' access to necessary therapies are not limited in any way.

We encourage you and your on-call staff to be responsive to the phone calls or notifications received from the health plan or the pharmacists that contact you regarding these opioid safety programs. We greatly appreciate your time and collaboration in providing quality care to the beneficiaries.

Sincerely,

VNSNY CHOICE Health Plans

Provider Services:

1-866-783-0222

Monday – Friday, 8 am – 5 pm

TTY users call 711

Request for Prior Authorization:

VNSNY CHOICE Total (HMO D-SNP): 1-888-672-7205

Fax number: 1-858-790-7100