



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
Office of Emergency Medical Services
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ADVISORY 22-08-01

To: MA Licensed Ambulance Services
Cc: EMCAB Members
From: Jon Burstein, MD, State EMS Medical Director
W. Scott Cluett III, NRP, Director
Date: August 11, 2022 (supersedes Advisory 17-05-01)
Re: Substitutions During Temporary Drug Supply Shortages

In response to the regularly occurring problem of temporary shortages of specific medications ambulance services carry and EMS personnel use in accordance with the Statewide Treatment Protocols, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health's EMS medical director and the Office of Emergency Medical Services are issuing in this Advisory the following standard authorization for all MA licensed ambulance services:

Whenever a medication is temporarily not obtainable, either in typical dosage forms as called for in the Statewide Treatment Protocols, or in any form, substitute concentrations and substitute medications may be used, in accordance with this Advisory. All such temporary substitutions must be approved by the service's affiliate hospital medical director and affiliate hospital's pharmacy director, with a date of expiration for the temporary substitution authorized. Temporary substitutions may only be made when there is a shortage of the medication in the dosage forms or in any form, as listed in the Statewide Treatment Protocols; otherwise, only the medications in the dosage forms listed in the Protocols shall be carried and used by ambulance services.

These temporary substitutions must deliver the same amount of active medication, and be packaged in a manner that prevents as far as possible any medication errors. This should include clear labeling separate packaging (e.g. zip-seal plastic bags) containing the medication with diluents, if any, and administration materials, and instructions for administration. In all such substitutions, ambulance services and their EMTs must pay careful attention to medication expiration, sterility, potency, and dose equivalent. Ambulance services must also make sure that all EMS personnel who will be administering such substitute dosage forms of medications or substitute medications in times of temporary shortage are appropriately trained and oriented on their use, and maintain documentation of such training.

If you have any further questions about these issues, please contact Renée Atherton, MA/NRP, Clinical Coordinator, at renee.atherton@mass.gov, or Jon Burstein, MD, at jon.burstein@mass.gov.