



PHARMACY FACTS

Current information for pharmacists about
the MassHealth Pharmacy Program

www.mass.gov/masshealth-pharmacy-facts

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Update to Pharmacy Facts #136: Please Refer to This Updated Document

MassHealth Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative

Background

The MassHealth Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative (COBI) requires prior authorization (PA) for members using opioid and benzodiazepine medications concomitantly. This is due, in part, to the growing data supporting the significant risk associated with the concomitant use of these medications. As part of this initiative and effective with the November 2019 *MassHealth Drug List* update, PA will be required in situations where members fill opioid and benzodiazepine medications for at least 60 days within a 90-day period.

The reference table on the next page lists the opioid and benzodiazepine medications included in the Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative. Further information on the PA requirements, including approval criteria, can be found within the *MassHealth Drug List* at www.mass.gov/druglist.

Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative Medication List ¹	
Benzodiazepines	Opioids
alprazolam	buprenorphine ³
chlordiazepoxide	butorphanol
chlordiazepoxide/clidinium	codeine
clonazepam	dihydrocodeine
clorazepate	fentanyl
diazepam ²	hydrocodone
estazolam	hydromorphone
flurazepam	levorphanol
lorazepam	meperidine
midazolam	methadone
oxazepam	morphine
quazepam	oxycodone
temazepam	oxymorphone
triazolam	opioid powders
	tapentadol
	tramadol
	ziconotide

¹Injectable benzodiazepine formulations are excluded from the Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative requirements.

²Rectal diazepam formulations are excluded from the Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative requirements.

³Buprenorphine formulations used in the treatment of substance use disorder are not included in the Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative.

Q&A ABOUT THE MASSHEALTH CONCOMITANT OPIOID AND BENZODIAZEPINE INITIATIVE

What is the goal of this initiative?

The MassHealth Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative focuses on safe prescribing practices for regimens incorporating both opioid and benzodiazepine medications in MassHealth members. The initiative includes prior authorization (PA) requirements for both opioids and benzodiazepines when used concomitantly.

What types of medications will be affected by this initiative?

This initiative targets both opioid and benzodiazepine medications; however, only claims for the benzodiazepine agent will be rejecting. A comprehensive medication list and additional information about the MassHealth Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative, including PA requirements, are available on the MassHealth Drug List website at www.mass.gov/druglist.

Who will be affected by the MassHealth Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative?

Currently the initiative impacts MassHealth members enrolled in fee-for-service, the Primary Care Clinician Plan, and Primary Care Accountable Care Organizations. Corresponding policies are in place or in development by MassHealth Managed Care Organizations and Accountable Care Partnership Plans.

When will the PA requirements for the MassHealth Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative take effect?

Polypharmacy within the same medication class currently exists and information can be found on the MassHealth Drug List website. The anticipated start date for this initiative will be November 25, 2019.

Will prescriptions written before the start of this initiative be grandfathered?

No. The initiative will take effect on November 25, 2019, with claims for benzodiazepine medications rejecting as early as January 2020. The pharmacy will be notified regarding the need for PA as well as the availability of emergency supplies if required.

How will prescribers know what information needs to be submitted for a PA?

The *Benzodiazepines and Other Antianxiety Agents Prior Authorization Request* form has been updated with additional information about the MassHealth Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative. PA requirements are available on the MassHealth Drug List website at www.mass.gov/druglist.

Is there a specific PA form for the MassHealth Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative?

No. The *Benzodiazepines and Other Antianxiety Agents Prior Authorization Request* form is available on the MassHealth Drug List website at www.mass.gov/druglist.

Will a PA request need to be submitted for each opioid and benzodiazepine medication?

No. Questions addressed in the *Benzodiazepines and Other Antianxiety Agents Prior Authorization Request* form will allow documentation of the full Opioid and Benzodiazepine regimen, to include name, dose, frequency, and indication. Additionally, questions about clinical rationale and tapering of agents will also be included.

Are any resources available to aid prescribers in determining which members will be affected by this initiative?

The MassHealth Drug Utilization Review (DUR) Program can provide prescribers with a list of members for whom the prescriber has (a) provided treatment and (b) may be affected by this initiative. Prescribers may request this list by contacting the DUR program at (800) 745-7318.

Are there any prescriber restrictions for PA requests for this initiative?

All enrolled prescribers may submit PA requests on behalf of the member.

Will a PA request need to be submitted when a medication changes in the opioid and benzodiazepine regimen?

PA may be required for members with a change in therapy. Dose changes may require resubmission of PA in members who also fall under the high dose opioid criteria, benzodiazepine polypharmacy criteria or in situations where the medication itself requires PA. Prescribers who need to cross taper or titrate medications should clearly document the plan so that DUR can facilitate those changes. Prescribers are encouraged to submit PA requests before implementing medication changes to avoid disruption in therapy.

If there is more than one prescriber involved in the medication regimen, which prescriber would be responsible for submitting the PA request on behalf of the member?

Coordination of care between prescribers is strongly encouraged to ensure safe and effective prescribing practices. Any enrolled prescriber involved in the member's care may submit the PA request. The prescriber who submits the PA request is encouraged to coordinate with all other prescribers for the member and clearly document the diagnoses and corresponding treatment plan, including all current medications, on the PA request.

Will member care be disrupted if the PA request has not been submitted or processed before the prescription is filled?

Emergency supplies of medications will be available to avoid disruption in therapy. The prescriber, member, and/or member's caregiver may request an emergency supply of medication at the member's pharmacy. Emergency supplies of medications are available for any clinically appropriate duration of therapy, with a minimum of 72 hours. There is no limit to the number of subsequent emergency supplies of medications, if such supplies are medically necessary.

What is the approval duration for PA requests submitted under the MassHealth Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative?

The duration of a PA approval and of a recertification may be up to 12 months, depending on the clinical situation.

What is a provisional PA approval?

A PA request may be approved provisionally for a duration of up to six months depending on the clinical situation. PA requests may be approved provisionally to avoid disruption in therapy when clinical documentation is required from a prescriber or during a documented taper plan. In circumstances where additional clinical documentation is required, prescribers will be notified via fax and/or telephone.

Who can answer additional questions?For Pharmacists and Prescribers

If you have questions about a specific patient or claim affected by the MassHealth Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative, please contact the Drug Utilization Review Program at (800) 745-7318.

For MassHealth Members

If you have questions about the MassHealth Concomitant Opioid and Benzodiazepine Initiative, please call MassHealth Customer Service at (800) 841-2900 (TTY: (800) 497-4648).