June 23, 2017

Dear Behavioral Health Provider:

The Department of Health and Mental Hygiene (DHMH) and the eight Medicaid Managed Care Organizations (MCOs) in the Maryland's HealthChoice Program are writing to notify you of several policy changes that take effect July 1, 2017. These policy changes are made in light of the increasing volume of opioid-related deaths occurring in Maryland and amongst Maryland Medicaid beneficiaries.

Background

In calendar year 2016, drug-and alcohol-related intoxication deaths in the State increased for the sixth year in a row, reaching an all-time high of 2,089 deaths, 89 percent of which were opioid-related.[1] This epidemic has disproportionately affected Maryland Medicaid beneficiaries as 55% of all drug-and alcohol-related intoxication deaths in 2015 occurred amongst individuals who were enrolled in the Medicaid program at some point during the same calendar year.

Due to the rise of opioid addiction and opioid-related overdose deaths in the State, DHMH, and its eight Medicaid MCOs - Amerigroup, Jai Medical Systems, Kaiser Permanente Mid-Atlantic, Maryland Physicians Care, Medstar Family Choice, Priority Partners, United HealthCare, and University of Maryland Health Partners - have collaborated on several policy changes and recommendations to promote changes in prescribing practices based on the Centers for Disease Control's (CDC) Guidance on Opioid Prescribing for Chronic Pain.[2]

Notification & Recommendation

Medicaid participants that are receiving long-acting opioids, fentanyl, methadone for pain, or prescriptions above 90 MME daily will have been notified of these changes. The attached policies related to opiate prescribing are being implemented no later than July 1, 2017 for all Medicaid patients, including those served by an MCO or Medicaid Fee-For-Service.

Resources

---

[1] Opioid-related deaths include deaths related to heroin, prescription opioids, and non-pharmaceutical fentanyl.
[2] The full 2016 CDC guidance on pain management can be found at: http://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/prescribing/guideline.html.

DHMH continues to hold webinars on the new opioid prescribing policies outlined in this letter. For additional information about webinars and other resources, please visit the DHMH Opioid DUR website at dhmh.maryland.gov/medicaid-opioid-dur or email us at dhmh.opioiddur@maryland.gov.

Thank you for your engagement on this important topic.

Sincerely,

Shannon McMahon
Deputy Secretary for Health Care Financing

Opioid Prescribing Policies

The following policies will take effect July 1, 2017 for both Medicaid Fee-for-Service and all 8 Managed Care Organizations (MCO):

Non-opioids are considered first line treatment for chronic pain. The CDC recommends expanding first line treatment options to non-opioid therapies for pain. In order to address this recommendation, the following evidence-based alternatives are available within the Medicaid program: NSAIDs, duloxetine for chronic pain; diclofenac topical; and certain first line non-pharmacological treatment options (e.g. physical therapy). Some MCOs have optional expanded coverage that is outlined in the attached document.

Prior authorization will be required for long-acting opioids, fentanyl products, methadone for pain, and any opioid prescription that results in a patient exceeding 90 morphine milligram equivalents (MME) per day.[1] **A standard 30 day quantity limit for all opioids will be set at or below 90 MME per day.** The CDC advises, "clinicians should use caution when prescribing opioids at any dosage, should reassess evidence of individual benefits and risks when considering increasing dosage to ≥50 MME/day, and should avoid increasing dosage to ≥90 MME/day or carefully justify a decision to titrate dosage to ≥90 MME/day." Moving forward, in order to prescribe a long acting opioid, fentanyl products, methadone for pain and opioids above 90 MME daily, a prior authorization must be obtained every 6 months.

The prior authorization will require the following items: an attestation that the provider has reviewed Controlled Dangerous Substance (CDS) prescriptions in the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP); an attestation of a Patient-Provider agreement; attestation of screening patient with random urine drug screen(s) before and during treatment; and attestation that a naloxone prescription was given/offered to the patient/patient's household member. Patients with Cancer, Sickle Cell Anemia or in Hospice will be excluded from the prior authorization process but they should also be kept on the lowest effective dose of opioids for the shortest required duration to minimize risk of harm. *HealthChoice MCOs may choose to implement additional requirements or limitations beyond the State's policy.*

Providers should screen for Substance Use Disorder. Before writing for an opiate or any controlled substance, providers should use a standardized tool(s) to screen for substance use. Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT) is an example of a screening tool.[2] Caution should be used in prescribing opioids for any patients who are identified as having any type of or history of substance use disorder. Providers should refer any patient whom is identified as having a substance use disorder to a substance use treatment program.

Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment (SBIRT), is an evidenced-based practice used to identify, reduce and prevent problematic use, abuse and dependence on alcohol and drugs. The practice has proved successful in hospitals, specialty medical practices, emergency departments and workplace wellness programs. SBIRT can be easily used in primary care settings and enables providers to systematically screen and assist people who may not be seeking help for a substance use problem, but whose drinking or drug use may cause or complicate their ability to successfully handle health, work or family issues. The provision of SBIRT is a billable service under Medicaid. Information on billing may be accessed here:

[1] Instructions on calculating MME is available at: https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/pdf/calculating_total_daily_dose-a.pdf
[2] A description of these substance use screening tools may be accessed at: http://www.integration.samhsa.gov/clinical-practice/screening-tools

https://mmcp.dhmh.maryland.gov/MCOupdates/Documents/pt_43_16_edicaid_program_updates_for_spring_2016.pdf

Patients Identified with Substance Use Disorder Should be Referred to Substance Use Treatment. Maryland Medicaid administers specialty behavioral health services through a single Administrative Services Organization - Beacon Health Options. If you need assistance in locating a substance use treatment provider, Beacon Health Options may be reached at 800-888-1965. If you are considering a referral to behavioral health treatment for one of your patients, additional resources may be accessed at http://maryland.beaconhealthoptions.com/med_hc_professionals.html.

Naloxone should be prescribed to patients that meet certain risk factors. Both the CDC and Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services have emphasized that clinicians should incorporate strategies to mitigate the risk of overdose when prescribing opioids.[3] We encourage providers to prescribe naloxone - an opioid antagonist used to reverse opioid overdose - if any of the following risk factors are present: history of substance use disorder; high dose or cumulative prescriptions that result in over 50 MME; prescriptions for both opioids and benzodiazepine or non-benzodiazepine sedative hypnotics; or other factors, such as drug using friends/family.

Providers should use the PMDP every time they write a prescription for CDS. Administered by DHMH, the PDMP gives healthcare providers online access to their patients' complete CDS prescription profile. Practitioners can access prescription information collected by the PDMP *at no cost* through the CRISP health information exchange, an electronic health information network connecting all acute care hospitals in Maryland and other healthcare facilities. Providers that register with CRISP get access to a powerful "virtual health record" that includes patient hospital admission, discharge and transfer records, laboratory and radiology reports and clinical documents, as well as PDMP data.

For more information about the PDMP, visit the DHMH website: http://bha.dhmh.maryland.gov/pdmp/Pages/Home.aspx. If you are not already a registered CRISP user you can register for **free** at https://crisphealth.force.com/crisp2_login. PDMP usage is highly encouraged for all CDS prescribers and will become mandatory (by law) in July 1, 2018.

If a MCO is implementing any additional policy changes related to opioid prescribing, the MCO will notify providers and beneficiaries**.**

[3] CDC guidance: https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/rr/rr6501e1.htm; and CMS guidance: https://www.medicaid.gov/federal-policy-guidance/downloads/cib-02-02-16.pdf)