



## \*\*\*Attention NC Medicaid and Health Choice Providers\*\*\*

### Updated NC Medicaid Prior Approval Criteria for Opioid Analgesics

From 1999 to 2016 more than 12,000 North Carolinians died from opioid-related overdoses. On June 27, 2017 NC Governor Roy Cooper and NC DHHS Secretary Mandy Cohen announced North Carolina's Opioid Action Plan, intended to positively impact reducing opioid addiction and overdose death and change the trajectory of opioid deaths and reduce opioid overdose deaths by 20% by 2021. President Donald Trump recently declared a national state of emergency around the opioid crisis.

The state opioid action plan is multi-faceted and strategies include:

- Coordinating the state's infrastructure to tackle the opioid crisis
- Reducing the oversupply of prescription opioids
- Reducing the diversion of prescription drugs and the flow of illicit drugs
- Increasing community awareness and preventions
- Making naloxone widely available
- Expanding treatment and recovery systems of care
- Measuring the effectiveness of these strategies based on results

The NC Medicaid Pharmacy Program has worked to update clinical coverage criteria for the use of opioids for pain management based on the CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain and to align clinical coverage criteria with the strategies of reducing the oversupply of prescription opioids available for diversion and misuse. These updates began on May 1, 2017, when the refill threshold for all opioids and benzodiazepines prescriptions was increased from 75% to 85%. **Effective August 27, 2017, prior approval will be required for opioid analgesic doses for N.C. Medicaid and N.C. Health Choice (NCHC) beneficiaries which:**

- Exceed 120 mg of morphine equivalents (MME) per day
- Are greater than a 14-day supply of any opioid, or,
- Are non-preferred opioid products on the NC Medicaid Preferred Drug List (PDL)

The prescribing provider may submit prior authorization requests to NCTracks through the NCTracks portal or by fax. New opioid analgesic prior authorization forms and revised clinical coverage criteria are available on the NCTracks Prior Approval Medications webpage. **Beneficiaries with diagnosis of pain secondary to cancer will continue to be exempt from prior authorization requirements.**

**Resources for more information:** NCTracks Pharmacy Call Center: 1-866-246-8505  
NC Medicaid Pharmacy Newsletter July, 2017 <https://dma.ncdhhs.gov/2017-pharmacy-newsletters>

CDC Guideline for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain — United States, 2016  
<https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/rr/rr6501e1.htm>

**CCNC Opioid Safety Resources: <https://www.communitycarenc.org/population-management/opioid-safety/> Information is located here and on the CDC website regarding calculation of MMEs.**

**As always, thank you for your support in serving our Medicaid & Health Choice communities!**