



Department of Health and Human Services  
MaineCare Services  
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To: MaineCare Member  
From: Stefanie Nadeau, Director, Office of MaineCare Services

Date: December 14, 2012

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Dear MaineCare Member:

This letter is to give more information about recent changes to Pharmacy Services. State law says MaineCare will have new limits on the use of opioids for pain treatment. The law also says MaineCare must have new limits on methadone and Suboxone for the treatment of opioid addiction.

## **MaineCare Service Reductions and Changes are listed below:**

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### *MaineCare Benefits Manual, Section 80: Pharmacy Services*

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#### **Limits to Opioid Coverage**

Opioids are medications used to treat pain. Some examples of opioids include Vicodin, oxycodone, hydrocodone, and fentanyl. MaineCare's coverage of opioids for pain will have new limits. The changes will start on January 1, 2013.

If you have new pain, and opioids are allowed, your health care providers will only be able to prescribe them for fifteen (15) days each year. If you need more than 15 days of opioid treatment, your health care provider will need to get special permission from MaineCare on your behalf. This special permission is called **Prior Authorization (PA)**.

If your health care provider can show that opioids are medically necessary and your PA request is approved, there will be a maximum allowed dose of the medication. As part of MaineCare's new PA process, you may be required to get a second medical opinion or try another treatment for pain, when appropriate.

If your health care provider believes that you do **not** need opioids, or if your PA request is denied by MaineCare, you and your health care provider will need to work together on a new treatment plan. If MaineCare denies your PA request, you will get a letter from MaineCare saying so. The letter will explain your right to appeal the PA request.

Although pain medications will have new limits, additional services for treating pain may be covered by MaineCare. For example, one new option for the treatment of chronic pain might be coverage of additional Physical Therapy treatments.

MaineCare is talking with health care providers about these new limits. Policy changes on the new limits will begin in early 2013. We will give you more information once we have it to share.

**Important:** The new limits on opioid treatment will not apply to those with HIV/AIDS, cancer, and other special conditions. There will be no new limits for people who are in a hospital, nursing home or in hospice care. Also, if you have both Medicare and MaineCare, this change may not affect you. In all cases, the limits will not apply if your healthcare provider can show that treatment is medically necessary and your health care provider gets PA to continue treatment.

### **Limits to Suboxone/Subutex Coverage**

Suboxone, Subutex, and their generics are medications used to treat opioid addiction. MaineCare members will have a 24 month lifetime limit for these medications. If you need either of these medications for more than 24 months, then your health care provider will need to get **Prior Authorization (PA)** on your behalf. To get PA, your doctor will need to show that your treatment is medically necessary. You and your doctor will get a letter from MaineCare when you are close to reaching your 24 month limit. You and your doctor should talk about the best treatment plan for you.

This new Suboxone policy starts on January 1, 2013. If you have been prescribed Suboxone for 24 months by January 1, 2013, your provider will need to get PA by January 1, 2013 for you to continue treatment.

If you first get Suboxone treatment after January 1, 2013, you and your doctor should make a plan to limit your use of these medications to 24 months or less. If you are currently prescribed Suboxone, you and your doctor should plan how you can transition off the medication. If you have completed 24 months of treatment and your provider believes it is medically necessary for you to continue treatment, he or she may submit a PA request to MaineCare.

**Important:** The 24 month limit on Suboxone/Subutex will not apply to those with HIV/AIDS, cancer, and other special conditions. There will be no new limits for people who are in a hospital, nursing home or in hospice care. Also, if you have both Medicare and MaineCare this change may not affect you. In all cases, the limits will not apply if your healthcare provider can show that treatment is medically necessary and he/she gets PA for you to continue treatment.

### **Limits to Methadone Coverage**

Methadone is a medication used to treat opioid addiction. MaineCare members will have a 24 month lifetime limit for this medication. If you need this medication for more than 24 months, then your health care provider will need to get **Prior Authorization (PA)** on your behalf. To get PA, your doctor will need to show that your treatment is medically necessary. Both you and your doctor will get a letter from MaineCare when you are close to reaching your 24 month limit. You and your doctor should talk about the best treatment plan for you.

This new methadone policy starts on January 1, 2013. MaineCare will start counting the months you receive methadone at that time. The earliest you will reach your 24 months of covered treatment is December 2014.

**Important:** The 24 month limit on methadone will not apply to those with HIV/AIDS, cancer, and other special conditions. There will be no new limits for people who are in a hospital, nursing home or in hospice care. Also, if you have both Medicare and MaineCare this change may not affect you. In all cases, the limits will not apply if your healthcare provider can show that treatment is medically necessary and he/she gets PA for you to continue treatment.

If MaineCare denies your PA request, you will get a letter from MaineCare saying so. The letter will explain your right to appeal the PA request.

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***No Appeal Rights for Rule Changes:*** MaineCare members do not have the right to appeal these reductions in MaineCare services nor to request a hearing because the MaineCare Benefits Manual (MCBM) is being amended by rulemaking to reduce these services. However, the rulemaking process does allow for public comment. A public hearing will be scheduled when the rule is proposed. If you are interested in attending a public hearing or submitting a comment regarding these changes, you can check <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oms/rules/proposed.shtml> periodically to see when the hearing is scheduled.

These changes are required as part of the Department of Health and Human Services' Supplemental Budgets, which were signed by Governor LePage on February 23, 2012 and May 16, 2012. Public Law 2011, Chapter 477, Chapter 657, LD 1816, LD 1746 125th Maine State Legislature.

If you have questions, please contact the Pharmacy Help Desk at (866) 796-2463, TTY Users Dial 711 (Maine Relay).

You can also find MaineCare rules at: <http://www.maine.gov/dhhs/oms/rules/proposed.shtml>