

What you need to know about new opioid bill

SB18-022 takes immediate effect starting May 21



Summary of SB18-022 for Physicians

Senate Bill 18-022 limits physician prescribing of opioid narcotics for certain patients. Patients within the following categories are exceptions and the new law does not apply to them:

- Chronic pain with a history of pain that in the judgment of the physician will likely last more than ninety (90) days
- Cancer-related pain patients
- Hospice and palliative care patients
- Patients who undergo a surgical procedure with pain expected to last more than fourteen (14) days because of the nature of the procedure
- Patients who received an opioid narcotic prescription from the same prescribing physician within the past twelve (12) months

For all other patients, the prescribing physician must limit the initial prescription of an opioid narcotic to no more than a seven (7) day supply of the medication. For outpatient care, after issuing the first opioid narcotic prescription the prescribing physician must check the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program database before prescribing any further opioid narcotics for the patient. We recommend physicians check the PDMP routinely and recognize that the bill does not require a PDMP check other than with the second fill.

The prescribing physician may exercise discretion to prescribe a second additional seven (7) day supply of opioid narcotic medication to the patient.

After the second opioid narcotic prescription, the law no longer applies to any patient and further prescribing of opioid narcotics to the patient is guided by the physician's judgment and medical indications for treatment of the patient.

Questions and Answers

Q: Do I have to limit the first two opioid prescriptions I write for a patient who received an opioid narcotic prescription in the last 12 months from another provider in my practice group?

A: Yes, unless the patient falls within one of the listed exceptions.

Q: Who determines whether a patient falls within one of the exceptions?

A: The prescribing physician. Physicians should use the history provided by the patient and their medical judgement to determine whether a patient falls within one of the exceptions.



Q: Is the PDMP check required for patients receiving a single dose of opioid narcotic to relieve pain for a single test or procedure?

A: No.

Q: Is the PDMP check required for inpatients?

A: No, a PDMP check is not required if the patient is receiving the opioid narcotic in a hospital, skilled nursing facility, residential facility, correctional facility or during a natural disaster.

Q: What if I am unable to query the PDMP database at the time of the patient's appointment?

A: A physician fulfills the PDMP check requirement if an attempt is made to access the database and the database is unavailable or is inaccessible due to technical error.

Q: Does the new law apply only to physicians?

A: No. The new law also applies to physician assistants, advanced practice nurses with prescribing authority, podiatrists, optometrists, dentists and veterinarians.

