



Dear Provider:

Thank you for your partnership and care of our mutual customers. As the opioid epidemic rages on in our state, it is important that we make the most of our relationship in helping our members – your patients – avoid the devastating effects of overuse and abuse of opioid drugs.

Louisiana has the sixth highest opioid pain reliever-prescribing rate in the nation, averaging 122 prescriptions per 100 people. From 2014 to 2015, opioid overdoses increased by 12 percent in the state, according to the Louisiana Department of Health.

New Laws in Effect

Among the bills that the Louisiana legislature passed during the 2017 Regular Session that addressed the opioid epidemic in Louisiana were two that affect prescribing:

- **Act 82 (House Bill 192), effective Aug. 1, 2017**, implements a 7-day prescription limit for first-time fills on opioid drugs to treat pain. The bill exempts the limit for people with certain conditions like cancer or chronic pain, and allows doctors to override the limit in certain cases, such as for medical necessity.
- **Act 76 (Senate Bill 55), provisions effective beginning Jan. 1, 2018**, tightens Louisiana’s Prescription Monitoring Program, which is a database doctors and pharmacists can check to make sure patients do not have dispensing records that indicate potential abuse. The law requires healthcare providers to check the database before prescribing opioids to a patient and recheck it every 90 days, if the prescription continues beyond that period. This may help prevent doctor shopping. For a guide to creating an account and submitting data, go to www.pharmacy.la.gov and click **(PMP) Prescription Monitoring Program**.

Louisiana Medicaid Opioid Drug Coverage

Throughout 2017, Louisiana’s Medicaid program (Healthy Louisiana) is implementing changes to its opioid prescription policy that includes quantity limits and Morphine Equivalent Dosing limits for its fee-for-service and managed care organization patients. For the latest state guidelines and resources, go to www.lamedicaid.com, and look under **Pharmacy & Prescribing Providers**.

New Blue Cross Opioid Drug Coverage Policy in 2018

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana and its subsidiary, HMO Louisiana, Inc., (Blue Cross) will change our opioid drug coverage policies in 2018. Blue Cross developed this policy after considering a breadth of clinical guidelines, industry best practices, state regulatory requirements and our own member population in order to set appropriate coverage guidelines that we expect will reduce opioid risks among our members and, ultimately, the community.

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Opioid Prescribing Tool Kit

Blue Cross has developed an Opioid Prescribing Toolkit to explain our coverage policy and provide resources for providers when treating patients for pain. The toolkit and coverage policy were developed by Blue Cross clinical pharmacists and physicians and approved by its Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee, a group of Louisiana doctors and pharmacists who guide coverage decisions.

The enclosed resources were compiled from a number of sources including the Louisiana Department of Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and others. The toolkit includes a compilation of best practices to plan and execute various tactics to help you and your patients manage pain safely and reduce risk. The toolkit enclosed includes the following:

- Drug Alert: Blue Cross Opioid Coverage Policy
- CDC Guidelines for Prescribing Opioids for Chronic Pain
- CDC Assessing Benefits and Harms of Opioid Therapy
- Opioid Screening Risk Assessment Tool and Opioid Safety Survey
- Sample Treatment Plan Outline, Definitions and Agreement
- Sample Pain Treatment with Opioid Medications Patient Agreement
- Louisiana Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) Overview
- Behavioral Health Services Information from New Directions*
- Prescription Drug Safety Saves Lives Patient Information

Again, thank you for being our partner in caring for our members – your patients – and helping them protect themselves from the harm opioid drugs can cause when overused or abused.

Sincerely,



Vindell Washington, MD, MHCM, FACEP
Senior Vice President & Chief Medical Officer

**New Directions Behavioral Health® is an independent company that performs managed behavioral healthcare services on behalf of Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Louisiana and HMO Louisiana, Inc.*