



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

Executive Office of Health and Human Services

Department of Public Health

Bureau of Health Professions Licensure

Prescription Monitoring Program

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PMP Notice

To: Massachusetts Licensed Prescribers

From: James Lavery, Director, Bureau of Health Professions Licensure
David Johnson, Director, Prescription Monitoring Program

Date: November 1, 2018

Re: PMP Utilization for Benzodiazepines

Purpose

The purpose of this notice is to inform prescribers of a change in state law for utilizing MassPAT prior to prescribing benzodiazepines.

Background

Current Department of Public Health (DPH) regulations indicate MassPAT participants must utilize the prescription monitoring program (PMP) prior to issuing a benzodiazepine prescription to a patient for the first time.

On August 9, 2018, Governor Baker signed into law chapter 208 of the acts of 2018, *An Act for Prevention and Access to Appropriate Care and Treatment of Addiction*. The law's provisions are designed to aid us all in our collective efforts to prevent prescription medication misuse and overdose, including opioids and benzodiazepines, and to provide critical access to addiction care and treatment.^{1, 2} To assist in accomplishing these goals, the law includes updates to M.G.L. 94C, § 24A that direct the Department of Public Health (DPH) to promulgate regulations that require MassPAT participants to utilize the prescription monitoring program (PMP) *each time a prescription for a benzodiazepine is issued*.

¹ Benzodiazepine use increases the risk of overdose for individuals using opioids by further contributing to respiratory depression.

² According to the September 2016 Chapter 55 Study, over half of opioid overdose deaths in Massachusetts 2013 to 2014 involved benzodiazepines. <https://www.mass.gov/files/documents/2017/08/31/chapter-55-opioid-overdose-study-data-brief-9-15-2016.pdf>

Compliance with Section 24A of Chapter 94C of the General Laws

The Department expects prescribers to check the PMP prior to the issuance of a benzodiazepine prescription, *every time*, as each check is an opportunity for clinicians and patients to examine medication use and engage in meaningful discussions and education around the safe use of prescription medications and the risks of substance use disorder and overdose, especially for patients who are co-prescribed opioids and benzodiazepines. Clinicians may also consider prescribing naloxone and teaching patients and/or family members how to use it.

For more resources on overdose prevention strategies for clinicians, visit <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/information-for-treatment-providers>.

We look forward to bringing you updates on developing regulations to address this requirement.

Contact Information

Questions or concerns regarding this information should be directed to the Prescription Monitoring Program: mapmp.dph@MassMail.State.MA.US.