



May 11, 2021

HHS Buprenorphine Practice Guidelines

Expanded Access to Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder

Background^{1,2}

More than [90,000 drug overdose deaths](#) are predicted to have occurred in the United States in the 12 months ending in September 2020, the highest number of overdose deaths ever recorded in a 12-month period, according to provisional data from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, and overdose deaths have continued to accelerate during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The alarming increase in overdose deaths underscores the need for more accessible treatment services, and studies have shown that medication-based treatment promotes long-term recovery from opioid use disorder.

Discussion^{1,3}

In an effort to get evidenced-based treatment to more Americans with opioid use disorder, the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) is releasing new buprenorphine practice guidelines that among other things, remove a longtime requirement tied to training, which some practitioners have cited as a barrier to treating more people.

On April 27, 2021, HHS released new [Practice Guidelines for the Administration of Buprenorphine for Treating Opioid Use Disorder](#). **These guidelines exempt eligible physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, certified registered nurse anesthetists and certified nurse midwives from federal certification requirements related to training, counseling and other ancillary services that are part of the process for obtaining a waiver to treat up to 30 patients with buprenorphine.**

Clinical Guidance and Recommendations^{4,5}

The IHS National Pharmacy and Therapeutics Committee (NPTC) has undertaken comprehensive reviews of Medication Assisted Treatment for Opioid Use Disorder (OUD), most recently in [August 2018](#) and [July 2020](#). **As a result, the following agents are currently listed on the IHS National Core Formulary: (1.) buprenorphine-naloxone, (2.) buprenorphine (limited to the management of OUD in pregnancy), and (3.) extended-release naltrexone.**

During its Spring 2021 meeting, the NPTC performed an abbreviated review of buprenorphine products in the treatment of OUD to address the recent release of the HHS Practice Guidelines. In follow up, the NPTC plans a comprehensive clinical review and update of Medication Assisted Therapy for OUD at the following NPTC meeting in August 2021.

References:

1. Department of Health and Human Services. Press Release April 27, 2021, <https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/202104270930>.
2. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. National Center for Health Statistics, [Provisional Drug Overdose Death Counts](#).
3. Department of Health and Human Services. [Practice Guidelines for the Administration of Buprenorphine for Treating Opioid Use Disorder](#).
4. Indian Health Service. [NPTC Formulary Brief: Opioid Use Disorder \(August 2018\)](#).
5. Indian Health Service. [NPTC Formulary Brief: Long-Acting Buprenorphine for OUD \(July 2020\)](#).