



## Changes to Opioid Coverage For New Users



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To try and combat the rise in opioid abuse, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) published new guidelines in 2016 when it comes to prescribing opioids for pain management.

After review of the new guidelines, and based on recommendation from the Drug Utilization and Evaluation Committee, The State and Public School Life and Health Insurance Board has approved changes to the way the ARBenefits plan covers opioids for new users.

**\*\*\*These changes only affect new users and not current utilizers. In addition, these changes do not apply to members with diagnoses relating to malignancy or end-of-life care.\*\*\***

The changes for new users, effective September 5, 2017, are as follows:

- \* All patients starting an immediate-release opioid for the first time (Vicodin, Roxicodone, etc.), will be limited to a 7 day supply, not to exceed 50 MED/day (Morphine Equivalent Dose).
- \* All patients starting an extended-release opioid for the first time (OxyContin, MS Contin, etc.) will require a Prior Authorization.

Once again these guidelines are for new users only. Limitations in supply do not apply to those being treated for malignancy or end-of-life care. Guidelines for current non-malignant users will be addressed at a later date.

If you have any questions, you can contact the EBRX member line at 1-855-757-9526.

### Terms to Know:

**Opioid** - A synthetic narcotic that resembles the naturally occurring opiates. This includes the illicit drug Heroin, and legal prescription drugs such as OxyContin and Vicodin among others. Legal opioids are mainly prescribed to manage pain.

**Morphine Equivalent Dose (MED)** – Also known as morphine milligram equivalents (MME), is a conversion tool that allows all opioids to be converted to the equivalent of one medication, morphine. So a 50 MED per day dose of Vicodin, is the same as 50 mgs of morphine per day. This helps doctors to assess risk when calculating the dose of an opioid.

Morphine milligram equivalent values vary between different opioids.

## Mammogram Coverage Change

The ARBenefits office will be closed:

Monday, September 4

In observance of Labor Day



Act 500 and Act 708 successfully made it through the 2017 Arkansas General Assembly.

Both will work together to provide enhanced benefits for our members. Act 500, effective in March 2017, ensures that our members have coverage for a preventative mammography, including the 3D

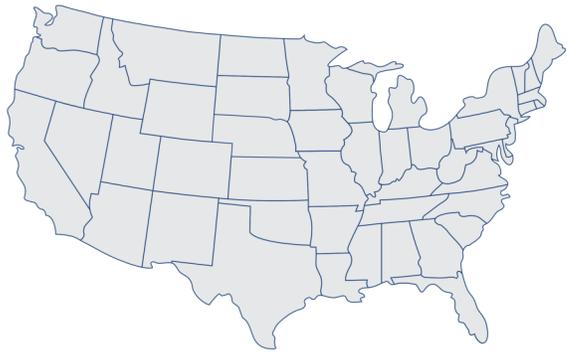
technology. Act 708, effective August 2017, ensures that our members have coverage for a breast ultrasound for screening purposes.

ARBenefits is working with the Benefit Coordinators on the implementation process. Once implementation is complete, applicable claims previously processed will automatically be

reviewed and reprocessed as necessary.

Note: ARBenefits plan covers one preventative mammogram per plan year. Benefit coverage for diagnostic mammograms and diagnostic breast ultrasounds will not be affected by this legislation.

# The Opioid Epidemic



Currently, the country is in the midst of an opioid epidemic. Prescribed to help alleviate moderate-to-severe pain, opioids carry a risk of addiction and overdose, especially with prolonged use.

Each day 91 Americans die from an opioid overdose. That includes prescription opioids and heroin. From 1999-2015, more than 180,000 people died from overdoses related to prescription opioids.

Since 1999, the amount of prescription opioids sold in the U.S. nearly quadrupled, yet there has not been an overall change in the amount of pain that Americans report.

Opioids have hit the Natural State hard. In fact, 2016 data shows Arkansas had the second highest opioid prescription rate in the country at 114.6 prescriptions per 100 persons. That means there was enough opioid prescriptions filled to cover every citizen in this state. Only Alabama had a higher rate at 121 prescriptions per 100 persons.

The national average, is 66.5 prescriptions per 100 persons.



Opioids interact with the brain by creating artificial endorphins that in early use can block pain and provide a

sense of euphoria. This is why opioids are prescribed to manage pain.

However, prolonged use lessens the euphoric impact where the user needs to keep using opioids or; they can go through withdrawal symptoms if they stop taking the drug. The dependency developed by the user can lead to prescription abuse or misuse which can cause overdose. That dependency can also have the user more likely to chase the euphoric feeling with the illicit drug heroin, or illicit drugs that have been mixed with opioids such as fentanyl.

States are taking steps in trying to combat opioid abuse. Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMP) are becoming more prevalent. The programs allow doctors to track medications being prescribed to patients which can cut down on people going to different doctors to gain greater amounts of the drug.

Health plans, such as ARBenefits are making changes to their requirements for opioid prescriptions .

Alternative methods for alleviating pain without the use of opioids are available. These methods include the use of non-addictive pain relievers such as ibuprofen, physical therapy and exercise, as well as behavioral therapy.

One of the best ways that people can help is to properly dispose of their medications when they are done using them. Properly disposing of prescription drugs such as at secure drug take back drop-offs keeps drugs away from possibly falling into the hands of abusers. You can visit [www.artakeback.org](http://www.artakeback.org) for a listing of drug take back locations in your area.

Resource: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

ARBenefits complies with applicable Federal civil rights laws and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, age, disability, or sex. Language assistance services, free of charge, are available to you. Call 1-877-815-1017x1.

Si habla español, tiene a su disposición servicios gratuitos de asistencia lingüística. Llame al 1-877-815-1017x1

## EBD Partially Processing Forms

Supporting documentation is required when an employee wants to include coverage for a spouse and/or dependent along with their enrollment to the ARBenefits plan.

Previously, EBD required all documentation be included with the enrollment form or else the member would receive their form back along with instructions on what is needed. None of the requested elections were processed until EBD received everything back from the employee.

Now EBD is partially processing enrollment forms submitted by employees which include the request to cover a spouse and/or dependent child.

EBD will process enrollment forms for all dependents providing the required documentation is provided. If there is documentation missing or invalid at the end

of the eligibility period for one or more of the dependents, their enrollment will not be processed.

If EBD does not receive the required documents before the end of the appropriate eligibility period, the spouse and/or dependents will not be added to the plan at that time. The employee would then have to experience a qualifying event, or wait until the next open enrollment period before adding their spouse and/or dependent.

Supporting documentation can be submitted to EBD through the ARBenefits Member Portal at [www.ARBenefits.org](http://www.ARBenefits.org); or it can be mailed or faxed to the number or address below.

**Fax:** 501-683-0983

**Mail:** Employee Benefits Division  
P.O. Box 15610

### Required Supporting Documentation

#### **Adding a spouse:**

- \* Copy of Marriage License
- \* Copy of ARBenefits Spousal Affidavit. To access a copy of the Spousal Affidavit, click [here](#).

#### **Adding a Dependent Child:**

- \* Newborns – Birth Certificate/Birth Announcement naming child's parents and date of birth
- \* Child – Birth Certificate, Court-approved adoption papers (with signature & seal)
- \* Step-child – Marriage license to the step-child's parent and birth certificate
- \* Legal Guardianship – Court-approved guardianship papers (with signature & seal)

**Remember:** It is vital to keep your email address up-to-date with EBD. If we have a member's email address, EBD will communicate with that member via the alert system in the ARBenefits Member Portal. When EBD sends an alert, the member will receive an email notifying them of the new alert.

In addition to letting members know their application has been approved, these alerts can inform employees if they are missing any required documents to complete their requested plan changes. If members do not check their alerts and miss a deadline such as a 60-day qualifying event window, their requested changes will be denied.

You can change your email address anytime by logging into your portal account and clicking on the Account tab. You can contact EBD as well to have your email address updated.

## Making Multiple Changes During Open Enrollment

Beginning with the 2017 Open Enrollment period, EBD will allow members to update/correct enrollment forms throughout the open enrollment period. Traditionally, only one submission from each member was accepted. **The statement "Submission to EBD is final" will remain at the bottom of the enrollment form and will continue to apply to submissions outside the open enrollment period.**

EBD will consider the last enrollment submitted during the open enrollment period as the final election choice. Anything

submitted after the close of open enrollment will not be processed. Remember, any submissions received through the new online enrollment portal will generate confirmation emails allowing you to follow the enrollment process at your convenience.

Open Enrollment for the 2018 plan year runs October 1-31, 2017.

### New Online Enrollment Guide

A new guide to enrolling online through the ARBenefits Member Portal is available the Forms & Publications section of [www.ARBenefits.org](http://www.ARBenefits.org).

If you are viewing the online version of this E-Newsletter, you can click the guide below to access it.

