

New Practice Guidelines Allow Expanded Access to Treatment for Patients with Opioid Use Disorder

On April 27, 2021, the US Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announced [Practice Guidelines for the Administration of Buprenorphine for Treating Opioid Use Disorder](#) to expand patient access to buprenorphine (Buprenex[®], Suboxone[®], Subutex[®]) for the treatment of opioid use disorder. [Buprenorphine](#) treatment for opioid use disorder reduces overdose and overdose deaths, and significantly increases positive outcomes for people with opioid use disorder.¹

HHS's updated practice guidelines were made effective April 28, 2021. Key highlights include:

Eligible Healthcare Providers:

- Practitioners who are eligible to prescribe buprenorphine under this revised guideline include physicians, physician assistants, nurse practitioners, clinical nurse specialists, certified registered nurse anesthetists, and certified nurse midwives who are licensed under State law and possess a Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) registration to prescribe controlled substances.

Exemption from Mandatory Training:

- Exempts the training requirements for eligible practitioners to treat up to 30 patients at any one time.

Exemption from Referral to Counseling and Ancillary Services:

- Eliminates the counseling and ancillary services referral requirement for practitioners who treat up to 30 patients.

Continued Registration with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and the DEA:

- Under this exemption, providers are still required to [submit a Notice of Intent](#) to obtain an "X-waiver" to prescribe buprenorphine for the treatment of opioid use disorder. *Please note: It will require 45 days for SAMHSA to process these notifications.*
- Buprenorphine prescriptions will still need to have an x-number listed on them.

For additional details, please reference SAMHSA's [FAQs About the New Buprenorphine Practice Guidelines](#) and the full announcement [here](#).