

## Pharmacy Services

(800) 522-0114, option 4

November 7, 2016

Dear SoonerCare Provider,

### **Methadone Coverage Update:**

The purpose of this fax is to provide information regarding an update in coverage of methadone. The Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) recently issued a bulletin regarding Medicaid strategies for preventing opioid-related harms. The bulletin specifically highlighted methods states could use to target prescribing of methadone for pain relief due to the disproportionate share of opioid-related overdose deaths associated with methadone when used for pain.

- The bulletin highlighted several studies assessing methadone overdose deaths:
  - While methadone represented less than 5% of opioid prescriptions dispensed between 2002 and 2008, it was implicated in one-third of opioid-related deaths during that time period.
  - Between 2006 and 2010, the rate of methadone overdose was 10 times greater than that for other prescription opioids among the Washington Medicaid population.
  - Tennessee found that the risk of out-of-hospital death in non-cancer Medicaid patients receiving methadone was 46% greater than for those receiving morphine.

In Oklahoma, for 2014, 23 deaths involving methadone out of 151 unintentional opioid-related overdose deaths (15%) were recorded in SoonerCare patients.

In an effort to reduce overdose deaths in Oklahoma, SoonerCare is planning to move methadone to Tier-3 of the opioid analgesics category **effective January 5, 2017**. Current Tier-3 criteria for the opioid analgesics category will apply. Members currently stabilized on methadone will be “grandfathered” and not require submission of a manual prior authorization if they have had a paid claim for methadone through SoonerCare within the last 60 days. **Members without recent paid claims for methadone will require submission of a manual prior authorization.**

Updated versions of prior authorization criteria for opioid analgesics can be downloaded from [www.okhca.org/rx](http://www.okhca.org/rx), by clicking on “Prior Authorizations,” then clicking “Central Nervous System/Behavioral Health” then clicking “Narcotic Analgesics.”

Prior authorization request forms can be found online at [www.okhca.org/forms](http://www.okhca.org/forms) (PHARM-04).

Thank you for the services you provide to Oklahomans insured by SoonerCare!