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South Carolina Requires Medicaid Providers to Check Database before Prescribing Controlled Substances

Columbia, SC – Beginning April 1, the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services (SCDHHS) will require that providers verify Medicaid members’ controlled substance prescription history before issuing prescriptions for opioids. Failure to consult the South Carolina Reporting and Identification Prescription Tracking System (SCRIPTS) database may result in loss of Medicaid payments for the office visit during which the prescription was given. Further action, such as referral to the appropriate licensing boards, may be taken against providers with serious or persistent compliance problems.

This new policy implements one of the most important recommendations made by Governor Nikki R. Haley’s Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Council, which was established to combat prescription drug abuse, prevent drug diversion and improve patient safety.

“We’ve seen far too many families and communities affected by prescription drug abuse across the country and in South Carolina,” said Governor Nikki Haley. “This is another positive step towards providing those families and their loved ones with the help they need to fight this addiction by adding a level of accountability to those Medicaid providers spending taxpayer dollars.”

SCRIPTS, a statewide prescription monitoring program administered by the South Carolina Department of Health and Environmental Control (DHEC), is intended to improve the state’s ability to track and stop the abuse and diversion of prescription drugs. With SCRIPTS, providers can view information on a patient’s filled prescriptions for controlled substances, as well as the identities of the prescriber and the dispenser. DHEC also reviews SCRIPTS to gauge prescribing patterns for each patient. In other states, similar systems have been most effective when the broadest range of providers participated.

“This new policy will reduce opioid abuse and give us new tools to identify drug-seeking behaviors and the providers who – often inadvertently – have enabled them,” said Christian L. Soura, director of SCDHHS. “The goal is for providers to use this program not just for Medicaid members, but for all of their patients, so that we can make the greatest impact on public health.”

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While this new requirement is for all Schedule II through IV controlled substances, there are a few exemptions. Providers who issue less than a five-day supply of the medication or are giving prescriptions for Medicaid members in hospice do not have to use the database. In addition, this requirement does not apply when a controlled substance is administered by a licensed healthcare provider, such as during an office visit or for a resident of a nursing facility. For patients who require long-term use of controlled substances, SCDHHS will require that SCRIPTS be consulted when initially prescribed and at least every 90 days thereafter.

For more information on the required use of SCRIPTS for Medicaid members, visit www.scdhhs.gov/scriptsfaqs.

About the South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

The South Carolina Department of Health and Human Services provides health care benefits to more than one million South Carolinians. Its mission is to purchase the most health for our citizens in need at the least possible cost to the taxpayer.

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