

Bulletin # 2

March 25, 2020

## NB Drug Plans Special Bulletin COVID-19

The health and wellbeing of our members and providers continues to be a high priority during the COVID-19 pandemic. For the safety of members and health care providers, and to ensure that members continue to have uninterrupted access to prescribed drugs, the NB Drug Plans will be implementing the following changes, effective **March 25, 2020**:

### Special Authorization Extensions

- Special authorization approvals for members of the NB Drug Plans that were due for renewal between March 1, 2020 and May 31, 2020 will be **extended until August 31, 2020**.
- Select drugs are excluded from this process, including drugs with a fixed duration of approval, as outlined in the special authorization criteria (e.g. Hepatitis C drugs).
- This update only applies to special authorization renewals. New requests for drugs that require special authorization approval are not impacted and must be submitted to the NB Drug Plans according to the standard process.

### Controlled Substances

- In response to Health Canada's recent exemptions for prescriptions of controlled substances under the *Controlled Drugs and Substances Act*, pharmacy and prescriber restrictions for narcotics, controlled and other targeted substances will be removed for all members currently subject to restrictions. As such, the "Consent for Restricted Prescription Drug Services Form" is **no longer required**.
- Methadone and buprenorphine/naloxone (Suboxone<sup>®</sup> and generic brands) for opioid use disorder will no longer require special authorization and will be temporarily changed to regular benefits on the NB Drug Plans Formulary.
- The Prescription Monitoring Program will continue to support the appropriate prescribing of monitored drugs, including methadone and buprenorphine products and will actively monitor their usage to reduce potential patient harm.

We will continue to actively monitor information regarding COVID-19 as it is received and will assess these changes on an ongoing basis.

For further assistance, or if you have any questions regarding this change, you may call our toll-free Inquiry Line at 1-855-540-7325 (Monday – Friday, 8 a.m to 5 p.m.).