

# Addressing Tobacco Use Treatment Prescription Denials for New York State Medicaid Patients

## (A Health Systems Improvement Grantees Guide to Providing Interventions for Tobacco Use Treatment Prescription Denials)

The expansion of New York State's (NYS) Medicaid coverage of tobacco use treatment (TUT) medications has made it easier for NYS Medicaid (including Medicaid managed care) recipients to access medication to help them quit smoking. However, Health Systems Improvement (HSI) grantees continue to receive reports from Health Care Organizations (HCOs) that TUT prescriptions are frequently being denied by Medicaid. This represents a major system barrier to providing quality evidenced-based treatment.

This guide is designed to help HSI grantees assist HCOs with issues surrounding Medicaid prescription denials for TUT medication. It will provide suggestions for addressing this issue from a health systems approach. Topics will cover suggested questions for HCO assessment as well as intervention and written policy considerations. We **highly recommend** that all HSI grantees incorporate assessing and providing health system interventions for prescription denials as part of their routine systems work.



### ASSESSMENT

Many HCOs already have existing processes for denials for both Medicaid and private insurance. It is important to assess these processes for addressing TUT prescription denials in order to identify opportunities to optimize and improve the existing system. Below are suggested assessment questions to begin this process:

#### Questions for Administrators: (e.g. Medical Director, Chief Medical Officers, Program Directors, Program Managers, Nurse Managers)

- ▶ Describe your HCOs process for addressing prescription denials:
  - How does your HCO find out about a prescription denial?
  - Is there a designated staff who addresses prescription denials?
  - How does the HCO communicate with the patient throughout the resolution process?
  - How do you ensure that Prescribers are aware of important Medicaid updates?
  - How do you ensure that your Prescribers are writing TUT prescriptions correctly?

#### Questions for Coding & Billing Staff:

- ▶ Which staff communicates with Medicaid when a denial is reported?
- ▶ Are these denial issues logged or recorded and if so, how are they recorded?



### INTERVENTION

Review information gathered by your assessment to provide suggested improvements to HCO prescription denial workflow or process. When developing your intervention, consider the following:

- ▶ How can other HCO staff (e.g., Social Workers, Patient Navigators, etc) assist Prescribers in addressing prescription denials?
- ▶ What information can the HCO provide to patients to assist them with getting prescriptions filled? (e.g., HCO contact number to address prescription denials, Dear Pharmacist Letter)
- ▶ How can the HCO ensure staff are appropriately trained to address prescription denials?



### POLICY

Ensure that part of the written policy includes a clear outline for how prescription denials are addressed. This can be outlined in two sections of a written TUT policy.

#### 5As Assist Section: Prescribing Pharmacotherapy

- ▶ This section should state the Prescribers role in informing the patient of what to do if they are having trouble with filling their TUT prescription. This should also include providing information on who the patient or pharmacist should call if they are having issues filling their prescriptions.

#### Appendix: Prescription Denial Process

- ▶ Add a section to the Policy Appendix entitled Prescription Denial Process which outlines the HCOs process for addressing prescription denials and resources.





## RESOURCES

### 1. Changes Regarding NYS Smoking Cessation Benefits and Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Rules:

The recent expansion of NYS Medicaid coverage of cessation medications combined with labeling changes from the FDA have made it easier than ever for Health Care Professionals to prescribe Evidence-Based treatment to New York smokers:

<b>EXPANDED NYS MEDICAID SMOKING CESSATION BENEFIT</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All seven FDA-approved cessation medications are now covered by all Medicaid Managed Care plans <u>with a prescription</u></li> <li>Combination therapy is covered</li> <li>No annual course limits</li> <li>No prior authorization required for prescribing cessation medication (except for brand-name products when generics are available)</li> </ul>
<b>FDA LABEL CHANGES:</b>	<p><b>Removal of FDA warnings for using two forms of nicotine simultaneously:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There are NO significant safety concerns with using more than one Nicotine Replacement Therapy (NRT) product at the same time</li> <li>There are NO significant safety concerns association with using NRT at the same time as a cigarette</li> </ul> <p><b>Removal of limit on NRT use:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Use for longer than 12 weeks is safe; FDA approved the removal of guidance that had limited NRT use to 8–12 weeks</li> </ul> <p><b>Removal of black box label warning:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>FDA approved removal of black box label warning regarding potential neuropsychiatric side effects for both varenicline and bupropion when used for smoking cessation</li> </ul>

2. **COE for HSI Writing Tobacco Use Treatment prescriptions for NYS Medicaid Patients:** When writing prescriptions to treat tobacco use; Prescribers can use this tool for reference. It can help to reduce prescription denials and increase patient access to TUT medication.

### 3. Dear Pharmacist Letter:

This resource is adapted from the Expanded Medicaid benefit letter signed by New York State Department Of Health and New York City-Department Of Health and Mental Hygiene Health Commissioners. It is meant to raise awareness and educate providers about the expanded Medicaid benefit. On the front page is the signed letter. On the back is a draft letter to the Pharmacist requesting that they assist the patient if they experience any difficulty filling their TUT prescription by contacting their Health Care Provider or Medicaid provider. This letter should be customized by the HCO and provided to patients when they are prescribed TUT medication.

### 4. Medicaid Pharmacy Program:

The NYS Medicaid Pharmacy program covers medically necessary FDA-approved prescription and non-prescription drugs for Medicaid fee-for-service enrollees. Enrollees in mainstream Medicaid Managed Care and Family Health Plus plans receive pharmacy benefits directly through these plans. Prescription drugs require a prescription order with appropriate required information. Non-prescription drugs, often referred to as Over-the-Counter or OTC drugs, require a fiscal order (a fiscal order contains all the same information contained on a prescription).

**For reporting of prescription denial issues contact [PPNO@health.ny.gov](mailto:PPNO@health.ny.gov) or (518) 486-3209**

### 5. Community Health Advocates:

Community Health Advocates (CHA), is a program of the Community Service Society that provides free and confidential individual counseling to individuals, families, advocates and providers about health insurance in NYS. Contact their helpline via phone or their program by email. Representatives can answer your questions about your health insurance prescription options.

**The CHA helpline is open from 9am – 4pm, Monday–Friday**

**Phone: 1-888-614-5400**

**Email: [cha@cssny.org](mailto:cha@cssny.org)**

