



POLICY FORUM
Policy Request Statement 19-1-01

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Subject: Increasing Access to Buprenorphine Treatment for SUD

Problem

Iowa continues to struggle to address the significant opioid use disorder problem in our state. While we have made progress in reducing opioid dispensing rates and increasing the utilization of nonopioid pain management modalities, individuals in need of substance use disorder (SUD) treatment often have difficulty finding a treatment provider and the rates of opioid overdose deaths in Iowa continue to be much higher than they were even a decade ago.

Brief Background

Medication assisted treatment (MAT) options like the use of buprenorphine in an out-patient setting have proven effective in helping patients with SUD, while expanding access to more communities than are possible utilizing older, more high-regulated MAT options like methadone. Unfortunately, buprenorphine prescribing comes with its own set of federal regulations, which are limiting the ability of physicians and other prescribers to utilize this medication to its fullest potential.

Utilization of buprenorphine for SUD is limited to physicians who have first received eight hours of MAT training, and ARNPs and PAs who have first received twenty-four hours of MAT training. They must then apply for a federal DATA 2000 waiver and adhere to strict patient panel limitations. These federal limitations have resulted in few prescribers in the state who have actually obtained their waiver. As of late 2018, these exact figures were 132 physicians, 44 ARNPs, and five PAs.

**Rationale
for Request**

Requiring such extensive, treatment-specific education is highly unusual in modern medical practice, of limited educational benefit, and serves only to disincentivize prescribers who wish provide buprenorphine treatment in an out-patient setting. Practices wishing to offer MAT services as part of a comprehensive effort to improve access and resources for SUD management will develop treatment protocols and provide necessary on-sight staff training to operationalize these new services. Such training is more than sufficient to ensure safe buprenorphine prescribing in an out-patient setting.

Policy Request

The Iowa Medical Society submit a resolution to the AMA House of Delegates seeking federal advocacy to eliminate the educational requirements for obtaining a DATA 2000 waiver.