

February 27, 2025

Improving Access to Medications for Opioid Use Disorder

Themes from Stakeholder Interviews

Melinda Becker Roach



Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission

Connect with us on



www.macpac.gov

Overview

- Background
- Themes from stakeholder interviews
 - Federal policies and funding
 - Stigma and misinformation
 - Provider availability
 - Utilization management
- Next steps





Background

Purpose

- Recent sessions examined access to medications for opioid use disorder (MOUD) based on the literature and a claims analysis
 - In October, we discussed the policy landscape and additional factors affecting access to MOUD (methadone, buprenorphine, extended-release naltrexone)
 - In January, we presented data on the use of MOUD in Medicaid
- This session presents findings from stakeholder interviews designed to gain further insight into:
 - The effects of the MOUD benefit mandate
 - Other policies and factors affecting access to MOUD
 - Medicaid levers that could address barriers to MOUD

Methodology

- MACPAC and Acumen LLC conducted 18 interviews between July and September 2024
 - Federal agencies
 - Beneficiary advocate
 - Other national experts (e.g., provider association)
 - State Medicaid and behavioral health officials and managed care organization (MCO) representatives, as relevant, in six states: Connecticut, Georgia, Idaho, Louisiana, South Dakota, and Tennessee

Themes from Stakeholder Interviews

Federal policies and funding

- MOUD benefit mandate
 - Coverage is an essential part of access
 - The mandate improved acceptance of MOUD as the standard of care
 - States did not always attribute new methadone coverage to the mandate
- COVID-19 flexibilities
 - Buprenorphine initiation via telehealth and expanded methadone take-home dosing improved access
 - States may need to revise opioid treatment program (OTP) rules and payment to take advantage of recent updates to federal OTP regulations
- Other federal support
 - Non-Medicaid grant funding has been critical to expanding access to MOUD

Stigma and Misinformation

- There is persistent stigma and misinformation surrounding MOUD
 - Methadone and buprenorphine sometimes stigmatized as “replacement drugs”
 - Patients may be forced to taper off medication for abstinence-only programs
 - Some states establish additional barriers to methadone (e.g., zoning laws)
- Federal rules can contribute to stigma and provider hesitance
 - Stakeholders report pharmacies not restocking buprenorphine for fear of running afoul of Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) rules
 - Complex federal regulations governing privacy of substance use disorder (SUD) treatment records (42 CFR Part 2) dissuade some providers from offering MOUD
- States described efforts to alleviate stigma through outreach and education

Provider availability

- Barriers to improving the availability and capacity of MOUD providers include:
 - Behavioral health workforce shortages
 - Lack of training and support for providers
 - Low provider reimbursement rates
 - Federal, state, and local barriers to OTPs
- Stakeholders discussed strategies such as:
 - Using non-Medicaid grant funds to recruit and provide support to providers
 - Establishing mobile OTP units and emergency department prescribing
 - Pursuing Section 1115 SUD and reentry demonstrations

Utilization management

- States and MCOs use utilization management to ensure appropriate care and reduce potential for fraud, waste, and abuse
- Most interviewees said prior authorization for MOUD leads to dangerous care delays and administrative hurdles for providers, and that concerns about drug diversion are not grounded in evidence
- States and MCOs can also use daily dosage caps to align with clinical standards
- Several interviewees noted that such caps are a barrier for patients who need higher doses of buprenorphine
 - The Food and Drug Administration recently began encouraging labeling changes to clarify that higher doses may be appropriate for some patients

The background is a solid dark blue color. On the left side, there are several overlapping, semi-transparent shapes in lighter shades of blue. These shapes include a large curved segment at the top left, a vertical rectangular bar in the center, and a large curved segment at the bottom left. The text 'Next Steps' is positioned in the white space between these shapes.

Next Steps

Next Steps

- Findings from the stakeholder interviews will be incorporated into a chapter for the Commission's June Report to Congress
 - Staff will present the draft chapter in April
- Looking ahead, staff are developing work to more closely examine the use of prior authorization for MOUD in Medicaid
- Questions for discussion
 - Would you like us to emphasize or elaborate on any of the issues raised by stakeholders when drafting the chapter?
 - What questions would you like to address through the Commission's future work on prior authorization for MOUD?

February 27, 2025

Improving Access to Medications for Opioid Use Disorder

Themes from Stakeholder Interviews

Melinda Becker Roach



Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission

FEBRUARY MEETING



www.macpac.gov