

The Medical Board of California is committed to consumer protection through the licensing and regulation of doctors and certain allied healthcare professionals

CARLOS VILLATORO (CV): My name is Carlos Villatoro and this is Medical Board Chat, the official podcast of the Medical Board of California. Today on Medical Board Chat we are talking about a significant change in prescription pads. With me today is the Board's Chief of Legislative and Public Affairs Aaron Bone. Aaron, welcome to Medical Board Chat.

AARON BONE (AB): Thanks Carlos, it's great to be here. How are you?

CV: I'm doing very good, Aaron.

AB: Awesome.

CV: So Aaron, what can you tell me about the changes happening to prescription pads taking effect on January 1st 2021.

AB: Thanks Carlos, there are new security requirements for prescriptions written on paper forms for controlled substances, which are drugs or medications considered to have the potential for abuse or addiction. So, starting January 1, 2021, if a physician or other provider prescribes a controlled substance on a paper form, that form must have a 12-character alpha numeric serial number and a corresponding barcode. There are other security features as well, you can find the details on our website.

CV: Where can our licensees get these forms, where can they obtain them?

AB: Yeah, well, you can't just buy them anywhere. Prescribers have to order them from an authorized security printer. These printers are approved by the California Department of Justice and are the only entities allowed to provide these forms. You can find a list of approved printers by going to the California Attorney General's website at oag.ca.gov then searching for the term approved security printer. Now, one good thing to know is that these forms have been available from these printers since the beginning of 2020. So, if you ordered any forms this year, then those should already be compliant with this requirement.

CV: Well that's excellent, and so what if I'm a physician who prescribes electronically does this apply to me?

AB: If you already prescribe electronically, then no. There's nothing else you have to take care of. Those are already compliant with this law.

CV: And so what happens if I'm a physician, and I don't have these forms, what happens if I try to write a prescription on a non-compliant form and that prescription is then taken to a pharmacist either on January 1st 2021 or after?

AB: Well, if your patient brings their prescription on the wrong type of form to the pharmacist then that pharmacist is most likely going to reject it and not provide the medication.

CV: And that would be a disaster for my patients.

AB: We definitely want to avoid that, yeah. There are very limited circumstances in which a pharmacist can issue a prescription written on an out-of-date form. That's why we're doing this podcast today and we're encouraging prescribers to ensure that they have the correct forms and that consumers are aware of these requirements. And like I said the last thing we want is for a patient to have a delay getting the medication that they require.

CV: And let's say I'm a physician who is just hearing about this, I mean even though the Board itself has communicated this in the past through various email blasts that we have done.

AB: Newsletter.

CV: Newsletter, yeah, exactly. So if I'm a physician that just hasn't gotten around to obtaining these prescription pads is there a grace period for me to obtain then?

AB: Well, we're in the grace period now and.

CV: Like, now?

AB: Like now, today. Like what is it, the 8th of December?

CV: That's correct.

AB: So that grace period is ending at the end of the month. Now these new forms they've been available, like I said, since the beginning of 2020 so if you've placed an order already you should already have the compliant forms. But, again because that grace period is coming to an end we really want to make sure, give an additional push, to make sure that providers and patients are aware.

CV: Well you know, I would hope that all of the physicians already have these forms and are already using them.

AB: Yeah.

CV: But this is certainly a good reminder for them to order the forms as soon as possible yes?

AB: Absolutely. I mean it could take some time before, from the time you issue the request to the printer, by the time you get them in your hands. So, if you don't already have the compliant forms, we strongly encourage you to make an order immediately.

CV: Now would be a good time, exactly.

AB: Yeah.

CV: So that's interesting and so what other changes should physicians be aware of that take effect on January 1st 2021.

AB: I'm glad you asked, so if you're the one who is dispensing one of these controlled substances then you have to report it on the system it's called the Controlled Substance Utilization Review and Evaluation System.

CV: Better known as CURES.

AB: CURES, yeah, it's a mouthful so we call it CURES. You have to make that report within one working day the law says after the medication is released or dispensed to the patient or the patient's representative.

CV: One working day?

AB: One working day. Now the previous deadline to make this report was seven days. The law taking effect January 1, 2021 says you got to do within one working day.

CV: So if I'm a physician I can't wait a week before reporting this controlled substance in the CURES system?

AB: Well this is for dispensers. So, it's mostly going to be pharmacist that are going to be required to comply with this. But, you could be a prescriber, you could be a physician who also dispenses medications. So, if you are the one that's actually dispensing it or giving it out to your patient, then this one-day requirement is going to apply. And then there's another aspect to this. So there's different, you know, there's different schedules. You got schedules 2, 3, 4, and 5 of controlled substances. There's also schedule 1, but those are not allowed to be prescribed at all. The law change is also requiring the reporting of schedule 5 drugs. So it used to just be schedules 2, 3, and 4. Now you're going to have to also report schedule 5 drugs again within one working day of dispensing.

CV: Oh so that's new?

AB: That's another new requirement that's taking effect, yeah, January 1, 2021.

CV: I see, ok ok. So Aaron, is there anything else that I didn't ask you that you feel would be important for the listeners of Medical Board Chat to know of?

AB: Yeah, thanks Carlos. If you're looking for more information about these topics or if you need to order these new prescription pads please visit our website at the Medical Board of California at www.mbc.ca.gov. Right there on the homepage you'll see a link on the right-hand side under quick links called CURES. That link will take you to a page that has more information about these requirements that we've been talking about today and there you'll also find a document with additional guidance on this that we developed along with the Board of Pharmacy and the Department of Justice. And last Carlos, I just want to say thanks. I appreciate the opportunity to be on with you today and talk to your listeners.

CV: And thank you Aaron and don't you forget guys to make sure that you follow the Board on Twitter make sure that you like us on Facebook and hey, did you know that we have an excellent app for iOS devices that you are sure to love because it lets you follow the licenses of up to 16 physicians and every time there's an update to their profiles it sends you an alert. Isn't that cool?

AB: That's awesome.

CV: I have the app and I have all of my family's doctors in it and it's great. I don't have to go on the site and search for them and they're just right there on my app.

AB: It pushes right out to you.

CV: It's great.

AB: Technology.

CV: And that's going to do it for Medical Board Chat this has been Carlos Villatoro and Aaron Bone signing off.