

SECTION IV. - BOARD POLICY
General

Prescriptive Authority for Physician Assistants

POLICY: It is the policy of the Board of Licensure in Medicine that the Board will not authorize blanket prescribing of schedule II drugs from hospital emergency departments by physician assistants.

It is the policy of the Board that Physician Assistants when working in a hospital setting or a U.S. D.E.A.-licensed clinic, may order and dispense schedule II drugs as authorized in their written Plan of Supervision, including emergency department analgesic starter packs (as defined by emergency department protocols).

PROCEDURE: To request authorization to delegate schedule II prescription privileges, complete the Schedule II Application – Plan of Supervision Amendment available from the Board and on the Board’s website http://www.docboard.org/me/me_home.htm

Effective Date: November 9, 1999
Revision date: September 9, 2003
Revision date: February 10, 2004
Revision: September 19, 2006
Revision: July 12, 2010
Revision: September 14, 2010

HISTORY: In 1995 the board, responding to a letter of inquiry from Pen Bay Medical Center, stated in a letter interpreting chapters 2 and 3 of the board rules, that Physician Assistants and Nurse Practitioners (then jointly referred to as physician extenders) could order and administer schedule II narcotics to hospital inpatients under the assumption that access to a qualified physician was readily at hand and that supervision of the Extender’s actions were both supervised and carefully reviewed after the fact through quality assurance review processes. In 1999 the Board responding to a letter of inquiry by Maine Coast Memorial Hospital, added that a PA working in the Emergency Department could order and dispense schedule II analgesics, including the dispensing of medication “starter packs” so long as the contents of medication starter packs were delineated in Emergency Department protocols and included only enough medication to allow the patient sufficient time to seek a licensed physician for further diagnosis, treatment plan, and prescription of appropriate medications by a licensed physician. An increasing number of requests for special consideration by individual physician assistants and their supervising physicians have led to the need for clear guidelines when considering specific requests.

In October of 2003, the Board of Licensure in Medicine replaced its decision guidelines. These guidelines are found on the Schedule II Application – Plan of Supervision Amendment. The earlier version read:

“Schedule II prescribing shall be reviewed and authorized on a case by case basis as called for in Board Rules. In reviewing specific requests by Physicians Assistants and Advanced Practice Nurses working under delegation for the authority to prescribe schedule II drugs, the Board shall consider the following criteria in assessing the appropriateness of the request:

1. Travel distance or lack of access to a licensed physician by the patient or the P.A.C.
2. Training and general competence of the Physician Assistant.
3. Specific training and supervision management by the supervising physician.
4. Clearly identified protocols in the written Plan of Supervision.

Other situation specific facts or particular needs that will improve patient access to critically needed medications, while assuring the protection of the health and safety of the public.”

September 13, 2005 a separate and parallel policy was established specifically for Advanced Practice Registered Nurses.

After September 2006 the Board of Licensure in Medicine went through extensive revisions of the schedule II application document. Since that application frequently changes, those revisions are not noted in the history section.

September 14, 2010 the separate and parallel policy for APRNs was retired because 2010 PL 512 eliminated the ability of APRNs to work under delegation of a physician. Therefore we removed references to APRNs from this policy. It also required the repeal of chapter 3 rules. The law change was sponsored by the APRN community with no opposition from the Maine State Board of Nursing or the Maine Hospital Association.

(See also - SECTION I ADVISORY RULINGS PHYSICIAN ASSISTANTS ORDERING SCHEDULE II DRUGS)