

Dear Colleague,

Expansion of access to medication assisted treatment for opioid use disorder, a safe and effective strategy to decrease the frequency and amount of opioid use and reduce the risk of overdose when combined with behavioral therapies, is a central element of the HHS Secretary's Opioid Initiative.¹ Under the Controlled Substances Act, as amended by the Drug Addiction and Treatment Act of 2000 (21 U.S.C. 823(g)(2), qualified practitioners may file an initial notification of intent (NOI) to treat patients for opioid use disorder using qualifying medications, presently buprenorphine. Initially a practitioner may treat a maximum of 30 patients at a time. After one year, the practitioner may file a second NOI for approval to treat up to 100 patients at a time.

Given the public health crisis of opioid misuse and overdose and the treatment gap between those individuals with an opioid use disorder and those currently receiving treatment, the Secretary has exercised her authority through rulemaking to increase the highest number of patients that qualified practitioners can treat with certain Schedule III, IV and V maintenance and detoxification medications such as buprenorphine. The final rule, which was published in the Federal Register on July 8, 2016 and goes into effect on August 8, 2016, raised the highest patient limit from 100 to 275 patients for practitioners with additional credentialing in addiction medicine or addiction psychiatry or who practice in a qualified practice setting as defined in the rule. The practitioner must have had a waiver to treat 100 patients for a year and submit a Request for Patient Limit Increase form which includes specific attestations to help ensure quality care and minimize the risk of diversion. The practitioner who has a waiver to treat up to 275 patients must renew the Request for Higher Patient Limit every three years to continue treating at this higher limit. Please note that there are no changes to the requirements for practitioners with a waiver to treat 100 or fewer patients under DATA 2000.

Attached you will find a fact sheet providing guidance regarding the new highest patient limit. If you wish to be considered for the higher limit please complete the on-line form here <http://buprenorphine.samhsa.gov/pls/bwvns/waiver>.

Sincerely,



Kimberly A. Johnson, Ph.D.
Director
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¹ <https://aspe.hhs.gov/basic-report/opioid-abuse-us-and-hhs-actions-address-opioid-drug-related-overdoses-and-deaths>.