

**To: AmeriHealth Caritas Pennsylvania and AmeriHealth Caritas  
Northeast Dental Providers**

**Date: April 10, 2019**

**Subject: Opioid Programs for Dental Providers**

Recent reports have revealed dentistry's role in the opioid epidemic, particularly with adolescents. Dentists prescribe about 1–1.5 billion dosage units (pills) of narcotics to patients in the United States, which represents about 12.5 percent of total opioid doses by all U.S. prescribers in 2015.

This may not sound like a major issue, but consider that, in 2015, U.S. dentists prescribed approximately 200 million opioid dosage units for post-op third molar surgeries yet only 50 percent (100 million opioid dosage units) were actually used by patients. The remaining doses were left in the home and available for possible drug diversion.<sup>1</sup>

In an effort to be part of the solution, AmeriHealth Caritas Pennsylvania and AmeriHealth Caritas Northeast will be launching a series of programs to create awareness around substance use disorder with viable solutions to reduce prescription opioid-related harm and combat drug diversion. Programs will include:

- Periodic communications.
- Data analysis to determine prescription writing and dispensing outliers.
- Continuing education (CE) program(s) or postings.
- Distribution of the Pennsylvania Guidelines on the Use of Opioids in Dental Practices.
- Webinar on Opioid Use Disorder Behavioral Health.

If you have concerns about possible substance use disorder or need assistance with referrals to behavioral health services, please see our resources at [www.amerihealthcaritaspa.com](http://www.amerihealthcaritaspa.com) or [www.amerihealthcaritasnortheast.com](http://www.amerihealthcaritasnortheast.com) → **Providers** → **Resources** → **Behavioral health and substance abuse resources**.

You can also call Dental Provider Services at **1-855-434-9241**.

Additionally, you are reminded to query Pennsylvania's [Prescription Drug Monitoring Program \(PDMP\)](https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/programs/PDMP/Pages/PDMP.aspx) (<https://www.health.pa.gov/topics/programs/PDMP/Pages/PDMP.aspx>) prior to prescribing Schedule II-V drugs and report to the PDMP system within 72 hours of dispensing a prescription within this drug classification.

Sincerely,



Jeff Fike, D.M.D.  
Dental Director

<sup>1</sup>Schroeder AR et al. Association of Opioid Prescriptions From Dental Clinicians for US Adolescents and Young Adults With Subsequent Opioid Use and Abuse. *JAMA Intern Med.* 2019;179(2):145–152.