



Improving Health Care Quality

Pharmacotherapy for Opioid Use Disorder

Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana (BCBSMT) collects quality data from our providers to measure and improve our members' care. Pharmacotherapy for Opioid Use Disorder (POD) is one aspect of care we measure in our quality programs. Quality measures evaluate a prior calendar year performance.

What We Measure

We capture the percentage of new pharmacotherapy events for opioid use disorder (OUD) among our members 16 and older with a diagnosis of OUD. The treatment of OUD with medication must continue for at least 180 days.

The POD measure is a Healthcare Effectiveness Data and Information Set (HEDIS®) measure. See the [National Committee for Quality Assurance \(NCQA\) website](#) for more details.

Why It Matters

Among people age 12 or older in the U.S. in 2020, 9.5 million misused opioids and 2.7 million had OUD, according to the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#). Studies show that people in pharmacotherapy for OUD are less likely to use illicit opioids and more likely to remain in treatment. Learn more from [NCQA](#).

Tips to Consider

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) has [information about effective medications](#) for OUD treatment. These include buprenorphine, methadone and extended-release naltrexone. According to [NIDA](#), medication should be combined with behavioral counseling for a “whole patient” approach, known as medication-assisted treatment.

If you are providing OUD pharmacotherapy treatment, we encourage you to talk about medications with our members, such as:

- How long you expect them to be on the medication based on their OUD severity and lifetime recurrence
- Possible medication side effects and how to manage them
- Proper use of naloxone in the event of emergency treatment of an opioid overdose
- Potential interactions with other controlled substances
- Why it's important to continue medication and the dangers of discontinuing suddenly
- Factors that can support recovery in addition to medication, counseling or therapy, and peer support

Consider providing our members written instructions to support these educational messages. Also talk with our members about the importance of therapeutic engagement and coordination of care with other contracted health care providers.

For more information, see [NCQA's HEDIS Measures and Technical Resources](#).

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