



Vermont Board of Medical Practice Policy on Buprenorphine Prescribing

For several years there has been a growing awareness in Vermont that many members of our communities struggle with addiction to opioids, both illicit, such as heroin, and prescription medications that are manufactured for legitimate use. Since January 2014 when Governor Shumlin devoted his State of the State Message to the topic of addiction, there has been a significant focus on this problem and how to best support those who have become inappropriately dependent on these substances. Many health care professionals and their patients are using the partial opioid agonist buprenorphine to assist in treatment for addiction to opioids. Motivated primarily by a desire to assist those physicians who take on the challenge of assisting these complex patients who seek care for their addiction, the Board of Medical Practice issued its *Policy on DATA 2000 and Treatment of Opioid Addiction in the Medical Office on June 4, 2014.*

Prior to the federal Drug Abuse Treatment Act of 2000 (DATA 2000), the only legal means of obtaining medication to assist with addiction was to seek treatment in an opiate treatment program (OTP) with methadone. DATA 2000 authorized legal use of buprenorphine beginning in 2002, making medication-assisted treatment for addiction available outside of OTPs for the first time. For many Vermonters with addiction problems, treatment with buprenorphine prescribed by a physician has been an option preferable to being in an OTP. However, in order to prescribe buprenorphine physicians are required to obtain a waiver from the U.S. Health and Human Services Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services

Administration (SAMSHA), which is commonly referred to as an “x-license.” With strong interest in seeing buprenorphine treatment and a requirement for the x-license, some patients have encountered difficulty finding a physician to provide this treatment.

The Board of Medical Practice hopes that this Policy, which includes information about obtaining an x-license along with the Board’s expectations for practice in this area, will support physicians who are interested in providing this care. The Board strongly encourages all who have an x-license and all those who are considering obtaining an x-license to review the policy.

Vermont Board of Medical Practice

PO Box 70, Burlington VT 05402-0070

802-657-4220

(within VT: 800-745-7371)

AHS.VDHMedicalBoard@vermont.gov

http://healthvermont.gov/hc/med_board/

[bmp.aspx](#)