

Medication-Assisted Treatment FACT SHEET

The MMA recognizes the important role that physicians can play in treating opioid use disorder (OUD). Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) is the use of FDA-approved medications, in combination with counseling and behavioral therapies, to provide a “whole-patient” approach to the treatment of substance use disorders, including OUD. With the opioid epidemic, many physicians, particularly primary care physicians, have seen an increase in patients seeking treatment for an OUD. The MMA encourages physicians to obtain their waiver to prescribe buprenorphine, a type of MAT that is permitted to be prescribed or dispensed in a physician office.

What is Buprenorphine?

Buprenorphine is used in MAT to help people reduce or quit their use of heroin or other opiates, such as pain relievers like morphine. As with all medications used in MAT, buprenorphine is prescribed as part of a comprehensive treatment plan that includes counseling and participation in social support programs.

Buprenorphine Training for Physicians

Under the [Drug Addiction Treatment Act of 2000 \(DATA 2000\)](#), physicians are required to complete an eight-hour training to qualify for a waiver to prescribe and dispense buprenorphine. The following SAMHSA-supported continuing medical education (CME) courses can help physicians qualify to prescribe buprenorphine in an office setting (courses may require registration and include fees):

- [The Buprenorphine Waiver Training at the American Academy of Addiction Psychiatry](#) covers legislation, pharmacology, safety, patient assessment, and more. Complete all the modules and pass the post-test at the end.
- The American Society of Addiction Medicine offers the [ASAM Buprenorphine Course for Office-Based Treatment of Opioid Use Disorders](#) in multiple formats that all provide the required 8 hours needed to obtain the waiver to prescribe buprenorphine in office-based treatment of opioid use disorders.
- [The Providers Clinical Support System for Medication Assisted Treatment Self Study at the American Osteopathic Academy of Addiction Medicine](#), developed by the Providers’ Clinical Support System for Medication Assisted Treatment (PCSS-MAT), consists of a 4.25-hours webinar session and a 3.75-hours online session. For a list of trainings provided, visit the [PCSS-MAT Calendar of Events](#).

How Do I Qualify for a Physician Waiver?

Under [DATA 2000](#), qualified physicians may apply for waivers to treat opioid dependency with approved buprenorphine products in any settings in which they are qualified to practice, including an office, community hospital, health department, or correctional facility. A “qualifying physician” is specifically defined in DATA 2000 as one who is:

- **Licensed under state law** (excluding physician assistants or nurse practitioners)
- **Registered with the Drug Enforcement Administration** (DEA) to dispense controlled substances
- **Required to treat no more than 30 patients at a time** within the first year
- **Qualified** by training and/or certification

Also, to maintain a waiver, a physician must be capable of referring patients to counseling and other services.

[Criteria and Eligibility Information](#)

[Applying for a Physician Waiver](#)

Applying to Increase Patient Limits

Physicians must apply to SAMHSA to provide buprenorphine treatment beyond the 30-patient limit for up to 100 patients with opioid dependency.

Physicians who have prescribed buprenorphine to 100 patients for at least one year can now apply to increase their patient limits to 275 under new federal regulations.

Additional information regarding increasing patient limits can be found [here](#).

Additional Resources

[Buprenorphine Waiver Management](#)

[Buprenorphine Treatment Practitioner Locator](#)

[Legislation, Regulations and Guidelines](#)