



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
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Health Alert: Patients at risk of overdose/withdrawal due to disruption in access to medications

Background

On Monday, May 11, 2026, the Massachusetts Department of Public Health (MDPH), Bureau of Substance Addiction Services (BSAS) was alerted to a provider disruption involving a Boston-based psychiatrist who prescribed controlled substances.

Patients receiving care from this provider were prescribed medications, including but not limited to opioids for both substance use disorder, benzodiazepines, stimulants, and amphetamines. This incident has led to a disruption in access to controlled substance medications for approximately 130 patients who have lost their prescriber. Impacted patients reside across Massachusetts, but may be concentrated in Suffolk, Middlesex, and Hampden counties.

Due to this disruption, patients may have trouble accessing some medications and should contact their primary care provider (PCP) for follow-up care. If they experience an emergency related to their medication and do not have a PCP, they should go to their local emergency department.

Patients who are no longer able to access their medication should call the following numbers based on their medication:

- Medications for substance use disorders and/or opioids for pain: BMC Addiction Warmline 617-414-4175.
- Medications for mental health treatment: Massachusetts Behavioral Health Helpline (BHHL) at 833-773-2445
- Patients who need access to substance use treatment or assistance on next steps should call the Massachusetts Substance Use Helpline at 800-327-5050 or go to helplinema.org.

More information about these helplines can be found below.

Withdrawal warning: The inability to access controlled substance medications may lead to withdrawal. Withdrawal symptoms from controlled substances can be moderate, severe, or even fatal. Withdrawal symptoms of opioids include nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, muscle spasms, anxiety, depression, and insomnia. Benzodiazepine withdrawal symptoms include anxiety, tremors, irritability, insomnia, nausea/vomiting, heart palpitations, seizures, hallucinations, and death. If patients begin to experience withdrawal symptoms, withdrawal management options are available. There are programs that treat withdrawal in both inpatient and outpatient settings. However, patients experiencing a medical

emergency (including acute withdrawal and significant mental health symptoms) should go to their local emergency department or call 911.

Overdose risk:

Some individuals may attempt to obtain controlled substance medications outside of their prescription if they lose access to their prescriber. Fentanyl may be present in any drug that is not obtained from a pharmacy and can raise the risk of a deadly overdose. Harm reduction supplies, including drug testing and naloxone (Narcan) are available at these locations: <https://www.mass.gov/info-details/harm-reduction-program-locator>.

Free helplines available:

BMC Addiction Warmline: Provides rapid access to medications to treat opioid use disorder including buprenorphine (Suboxone), Sublocade, injectable naltrexone (Vivitrol), linkage to treatment on demand (including methadone) and referral at no-cost to long term care. Can assist all patients impacted by the disruption accessing controlled substance medication (include bridge scripts, referrals and/or care coordination). Depending on the time of the call, patients may receive call-back after leaving a message. Phone number: 617-414-4175.

Massachusetts Substance Use Helpline: Provides the public with resource information about harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services for substance use disorder available in Massachusetts and a warm hand off to these programs when needed. Individuals at risk for or experiencing withdrawal (may be due to disruption in access to their medication), begins experiencing any of the symptoms described above, or is otherwise in need of substance use treatment services, they should contact the Massachusetts Substance Use Helpline. Connect with the Helpline by calling 800-327-5050 or [visiting their website](http://helplinema.org) (helplinema.org). The line is free and available 24/7, 365 days a year via phone call, text, or chat.

Massachusetts Behavioral Health Helpline (BHHL): Provides the public with the full range of treatment services for mental health and substance use offered in Massachusetts, including outpatient, urgent, and immediate crisis care. They provide real-time support, initial clinical assessment, and connection to the right evaluation and treatment. Impacted individuals can call or text the Massachusetts Behavioral Health Helpline (BHHL) at 833-773-2445 for more information about accessing medications and referrals to ongoing mental health treatment in their area. Patients can also directly connect with their local Community Behavioral Health Center (CBHC) to access mental health and crisis care. A listing of all local sites can be found at mass.gov/cbhc. The line is free and available 24/7, 365 days a year via call, text or chat. Connect with the Helpline by calling 833-773-2445 or [visiting their website](http://masshelpline.com) (masshelpline.com).

SafeSpot: Provides virtual spotting services to people who use drugs to prevent overdose. An individual using drugs alone calls the line, uses the substance, and stays in verbal communication with the operator until both the caller and the operator have decided that it is safe to disconnect. If there is an emergency, the operator will call the designated responder given by the caller or emergency response services. By phone: 800-972-0590 or [visiting their website](http://safe-spot.me) (safe-spot.me).

Provider mentorship:

Massachusetts Consultation Service for the Treatment of Addiction and Pain (MCSTAP): MCSTAP provides real-time support to providers when caring for patients who seek treatment for pain or substance use disorder, including those affected by a disruption event. MCSTAP works to increase capacity and provider comfort using evidence-based practices in screening for, diagnosing, treating, and managing the care of patients with chronic pain and/or SUDs. Upon request, a MCSTAP physician consultant with expertise in SUD and chronic pain treatment will consult with a provider prescribing or

care management questions regarding a provider's patients suffering from these conditions. MCSTAP also offers a clinical mentoring program, which enables providers to meet with a designated physician consultant regularly to discuss any patients including those inherited on high-dose opioids or other complex clinical issues. Call MCSTAP at 833-PAIN-SUD (1-833-724-6783), M-F, 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. Website: mcstap.com.

Questions about this disruption can be sent to ORRP@mass.gov.