

What Psychiatrists Need to Know About...

Controlled Substance Reporting

North Carolina is participating in a national effort to prevent and reduce prescription drug abuse – the project is a joint venture of the National Governor’s Association and SAMHSA. At the start of the year, NCPA signed on to participate in the North Carolina Statewide Strategic Plan to Prevent Prescription Drug Abuse. During the course of NCPA’s participation, one action step continued to surface as an integral part of the statewide strategy: increased participation of physicians in North Carolina’s Controlled Substance Reporting System (CSRS).

Background

This statewide reporting system was established by North Carolina law to improve the state’s ability to identify people who abuse and misuse prescription drugs classified as Schedule II-V controlled substances. It is also meant to assist clinicians in identifying and referring for treatment patients misusing controlled substances. The CSRS is administered by the Drug Control Unit, a division of the North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services

North Carolina utilizes the RxSentry Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, a web-based system that facilitates the collection, analysis, and reporting of information on the prescribing, dispensing, and use of prescription drugs. Through this online system, North Carolina prescribers and pharmacies can

register in the system and contribute prescribing data that will ultimately work to:

- Identify and prevent diversion of prescribed controlled substances.
- Reduce morbidity and mortality from unintentional drug overdoses.
- Reduce the costs associated with the misuse and abuse of controlled substances.
- Assist clinicians in identifying and referring for treatment patients misusing controlled substances.
- Reduce the cost for law enforcement of investigating cases of diversion and misuse.
- Inform the public, including health care professionals, of the use and abuse trends related to prescription drugs.

North Carolina has had its CSRS since 2007, and while initial participant registration has increased, regular use of the registry has been somewhat stagnant. Users have lamented a lack of time and resources as reasons for not using the system; many requested the ability to delegate participation to select staff members.

Delegate Accounts Now Available

Utilizing delegate accounts is an effort aimed at reducing the administrative time required for a physician by allowing a staff person to

access the database. During last year’s legislative session, the ability to delegate participation in the CSRS was approved by the North Carolina General Assembly. Delegate account access is only for those who do not have prescribing authority. Physicians, Residents, Physician Assistants, Nurse Practitioners, Dentists and Pharmacists cannot be a delegate.

Further, the ability to delegate is limited to practitioners licensed in North Carolina. Delegates must work under the direction and supervision of the prescriber who holds the “master account.” Like with other supervisory roles, the master account holder is responsible for all delegate activity. While there is no limit on the number of delegates a master account may have, it is strongly recommended that the number of delegates is limited to a number manageable by the supervising prescriber.

Who Can Access the Information?

Information submitted through the reporting system is privileged, confidential and not considered a public record. Information may only be released under certain circumstances to people authorized to receive the information. People authorized to get information from the system include:

- Practitioners and dispensers of controlled substances for the purpose of providing medical care for their patients.

- Special Agents of the North Carolina State Bureau of Investigation who are assigned to the Diversion & Environmental Crimes Unit.
- Assigned special agents of the primary monitoring authorities for other states.
- A court through a lawful court order in a criminal action.
- The Division of Medical Assistance (DMA).
- Certain licensing boards.
- Medical Examiners for the purpose of investigating the death of an individual.


Enrolling in CSRS

Enrolling in the system may be completed online or via a mailed application. Instructions for both

enrollment processes are outlined on the NC DHHS website, <http://www.ncdhhs.gov/mhddsas/controlledsubstance>. Rx Sentry also has created a step-by-step Practitioner's Training Guide that provides instructions on how to request access and link delegate accounts. The training guide is available on this website as well.

CSRS participation can serve as a resource for mitigating risks associated with prescribing controlled substances. For example, registrants can run reports related to their own prescribing behavior and receive alerts when their patients receive additional prescriptions for controlled substances from another registered prescriber. The system's obvious benefit is to improve patient health and safety by identi-

fying patients who are receiving multiple prescriptions and may be struggling with addiction or unintentional misuse or over-medication. As such, NCPA encourages the use of the CSRS by our members.

For questions related to the CSRS, please contact the CSRS staff within the North Carolina Drug Control Unit at 919-733-1765 or email NCControlSubstance.Reporting@dhhs.nc.gov. 

CSRS: Do's and Don'ts for Prescribers and Dispensers

DO:

- Prior to prescribing or dispensing a controlled substance, check the database for duplicate prescriptions or unusual activity.
- Discuss any findings of concern directly with your patients.
- Listen to your patients when they say the system is in error – contact NC CSRS staff to help address questions and verify information.
- Learn about SBIRT (Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral for Treatment www.sbirtno.org) and use it with your patients.*
- Use behavioral contracts with patients when appropriate.
- Report forgeries to law enforcement.
- Inform NC CSRS staff of non-reporting pharmacies.

DON'T:

- Use the CSRS to exclude patients from practices or services.
- Discharge patients without intervening and attempting to refer for substance abuse treatment or pain management.
- Use CSRS prescription information to make a referral to law enforcement when it's your only source of information.

For information or questions please contact the North Carolina Controlled Substances Reporting System staff at 919-733-1765 or email NCControlSubstance.Reporting@dhhs.nc.gov.

**Research shows that a brief intervention by a physician has an impact on patient behavior.*