



Department of Health and Human Services
Maine Center for Disease Control and Prevention
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December 19, 2016

Dear Prescribers, Dispensers, Professional Boards and other interested parties:

Thank you for your commitment to the health of the people of Maine. As you are aware, Public Law Chapter 488, an *Act to Prevent Opioid Abuse by Strengthening the Controlled Substances Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP)*, has been in effect since July 29, 2016.

For the past six months, the Department of Health and Human Services (Department) has been collaborating with our medical community to improve functionality of the Maine PMP and promulgate rules. The Department anticipates emergency rules being effective January 2, 2017. As part of the APA process, the new rules will receive a thorough public vetting, including a public hearing which will take place near the end of January. We encourage stakeholders to provide meaningful comments at that time so the Department may finalize a rule that is as inclusive as possible.

Additionally, the Department has been informed by multiple stakeholders of a concern regarding the short period of notice for their respective healthcare communities to fully comprehend and implement systems around the new rules. As a result of these concerns, and our desire to support Maine's medical community in the implementation of this rule, the Department plans to allow a brief grace period regarding the enforcement penalties articulated in the law. To be clear, Chapter 488 Law is still fully in effect, however:

1. Professional boards will not be notified by the Department for non-compliance with the requirements of the Law and rules until **March 1, 2017**.
2. Civil penalties as outlined in Chapter 488 Law will not be enforced until **October 1, 2017**.

Electronic Prescribing:

Additionally, there have been questions and concerns regarding the waiver process for electronic prescribing; the Department anticipates initiating the waiver application process by **April 1, 2017**.

Opioid Continuing Education opportunity- please save the date:

On **March 6, 2017**, the Department will host an all-day conference at the Augusta Civic Center about the opioid epidemic facing Maine. The event will feature speakers from the National Safety Council and local speakers who are leaders in opioid medication practices. Attendees will be able to learn and discuss alternatives to pain management along with successful tapering options for patients already prescribed opiates. We will provide more details soon on the conference and how to register.

Please do not hesitate to contact the Department so we may collectively work together to combat the opioid challenges in Maine through enhancing the PMP and implementing PL 488 rules.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Christopher J. Pezzullo, DO". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the initials "CJ" being particularly prominent.

Christopher J Pezzullo, DO

State Health Officer

*“Overall, 1 of every 550 patients started on opioid therapy died of opioid-related causes a median of 2.6 years after the first opioid prescription; **the proportion was as high as 1 in 32 among patients receiving doses of 200 MME or higher.** We know of no other medication routinely used for a nonfatal condition that kills patients so frequently.” (The New England Journal of Medicine)*