Use of controlled substances is an essential part of the prescription drug regimen for many members. However, these medications come with an increased potential to adversely affect both members and plan sponsors. Unlike other categories of medications, inappropriate use of controlled substances has the potential to compromise member safety, increase potential for addiction and diminished quality of life, increase the risk of workplace injuries, and increase the chance for diversion. These effects may result in poor health outcomes, an increased risk of complications, and a negative impact from a cost and mortality perspective.

Per the National Institute on Drug Abuse, every day, more than 90 Americans die after overdosing on opioids.\(^1\) The misuse of and addiction to opioids—including prescription pain relievers, heroin, and synthetic opioids such as fentanyl—is a serious national crisis that affects public health as well as social and economic welfare.

Serve You Rx’s Opioid Risk Management Program addresses the crisis of abuse and addiction, and the associated problem of rising costs, by reducing the likelihood of misuse through a multitude of proactive and retrospective approaches.

**PROACTIVE AT THE POINT OF PRESCRIBING AND DISPENSING**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) have taken steps to quantify member opioid use and cumulative dosage points at which member safety and abuse start to compromise appropriate use of opioids. The Serve You Rx Opioid Risk Management Program uses this information to apply member safety checks during the prescribing and dispensing of opioid prescriptions.

**Short- and Long-Acting Opioids**

*Short-acting opioids* have a quick onset of action or are quickly effective, but have a short duration of action that requires repeated doses and are generally used as needed. *Long-acting opioids* have a longer duration of action with less frequent dosing (i.e., once or twice a day) and are generally used for maintenance treatment.

**Quantity Limits**

The placement of per-fill quantity limits on selected medications is a standard industry practice that is active in most commercial plans today. Quantity limits for short-acting and long-acting opioids are applied to further promote the effective use of these products in pain management and to prevent inadvertent addiction and deter diversion.

The limits align with recent CDC guidelines and clinical best practice on the number of metric units, days’ supply, and number of fills within a given time period that a member can receive. Prior authorization criteria are established for physicians seeking to prescribe dosages that exceed these limits.
**Point-of-Service Drug Utilization Review (DUR)**

By performing real-time analysis on all submitted claims at the point of sale, the utilization review component of our Opioid Risk Management Program helps detect duplicate claims, instances where refills are being obtained too soon, and situations where the dose or duration of therapy may be excessive.

The review process begins when a pharmacy claim enters our claim adjudication system. In addition to performing all of the necessary tasks to pay the claim, the system analyzes the information on the claim in the clinical context of all other known member attributes, including other medications on profile, refill timing, allowable quantity per prescription, treatment duration, duplicate or similar therapy compared to what was recently dispensed elsewhere, etc. If the system detects an incompatibility, contraindication, or other potential problem with therapy, it informs the dispensing pharmacist through an alert or a hard-halt on the claim. Serve You Rx provides this information to dispensing pharmacists, whether they are located at a retail pharmacy or our own mail service facilities, in an effort to help them see the member’s total therapy picture and to aid in the detection of drug interactions and other problems with therapy to mitigate instances of drug misuse.

**Prior Authorization**

Select opioids, such as fentanyl and long-acting opioids, that are most predisposed to off-label or experimental use or that are associated with increased toxicity and/or costly wastage are subject to prior authorization. This is to ensure these medications are used in the most appropriate cases and dosages as recommended by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. The medical necessity of using specific medications is confirmed before benefit coverage is approved.

**HINDSIGHT FROM RETROSPECTIVE REVIEW**

Retrospective review of opioid prescribing patterns, dispensing patterns of pharmacies, and member utilization further help to tackle this crisis through awareness and education using real life data.

The goal of the Serve You Rx retrospective DUR program is to minimize the occurrence of drug abuse, diversion, and inappropriate use of high-risk medications, as well as to identify at-risk members and provide their healthcare providers with comprehensive information to enable the providers to initiate appropriate medical intervention.

On a quarterly basis, reports are reviewed by a clinical pharmacist to identify members receiving multiple controlled substance prescriptions and/or using multiple prescribers or pharmacies to determine if prescriber or dispensing pharmacy intervention is warranted.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, more than 1,000 people are treated in emergency departments EVERY DAY for not using prescription opioids as directed.
MINIMIZE RISKS AND MANAGE COST

Increased costs are a natural consequence of opioid misuse. The CDC estimates that the total “economic burden” of prescription opioid misuse alone in the United States is $78.5 billion a year, including the costs of healthcare, lost productivity, addiction treatment, and criminal justice involvement. While the number one priority of our Opioid Risk Management Program is to improve member health, the downstream effect of cost savings can be achieved by instituting strategies that manage utilization, and ultimately, risk.

The annual economic burden of prescription opioid misuse in the U.S. is...

$78.5 billion

MONITORING AND SHAPING THE LANDSCAPE

PRESCRIPTION DRUG MONITORING PROGRAM PARTICIPATION

Prescription drug monitoring programs (PDMPs) are newer tools that help combat the ongoing prescription drug abuse epidemic by providing electronic databases that collect information on controlled substances, and other medications with abuse potential, that are dispensed within their jurisdictions. Nearly all states have enacted laws to establish PDMPs, which include data submission requirements for pharmacies and review requirements for healthcare professionals involved in the prescribing and dispensing of these medications. By providing valuable information about prescriptions for these medications that are dispensed in the state, the program aids healthcare professionals in their prescribing and dispensing decisions. The PDMP also fosters the ability of pharmacies, healthcare professionals, law enforcement agencies, and public health officials to work together to reduce the misuse, abuse, and diversion of prescribed medications with reporting requirements. For plans with exclusive mail and for members utilizing the mail service pharmacy, Serve You Rx mail pharmacies actively meet data reporting requirements and meet or exceed all pharmacist review requirements for PDMPs for all states in which services are licensed.

SAFEGUARDS FOR FRAUD, WASTE, AND ABUSE

Serve You Rx closely monitors developments relative to emerging areas of fraud, waste, and abuse, including highly addictive drugs. We rely on information and related guidance from the FDA, proceedings of the Pharmacy and Therapeutics committee, and consensus guidance from industry stakeholders related to access, appropriate use, education, and other emerging attributes of prescription drugs of abuse in order to continue to develop appropriate cost control and care management strategies. The tools that Serve You Rx currently employs to manage prescription drugs of abuse provide safeguards for clients and members against potential drugs that may become problematic in the future.
NATIONAL ADVOCACY AND SUPPORT
As a PBM and owner of mail pharmacy services, we recognize that we have a position in the pharmaceutical supply chain and therefore have a role in helping to combat the public health crisis associated with addiction and prescription opiates. In that effort, Serve You Rx does the following:

- Sponsors and attends the Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act (CARA) Family Day, an annual event hosted by the Addiction Policy Forum;
- Sponsors and attends the National Rx Drug Abuse & Heroin Summit;
- Promotes national awareness programs such as Black Balloon Day and National Prescription Drug Take-Back Day; and
- Supports the Meta House, a rehabilitation center and residential facility for mothers struggling with addiction.

EDUCATION STRATEGIES
Serve You Rx offers a range of educational content and resources tailored to different audiences. This includes, but is not limited to, mailings to members regarding drug information, disease states, and savings opportunities, as well as written and presentation content focused on opioid management for brokers, third party administrators, plan sponsors, and other stakeholders.

SAFE DRUG DISPOSAL
Helping members remove highly addictive opioids from the home when they are no longer necessary is one of our priorities. More than 53 percent of people who misused prescription opioids in 2017 obtained the medication from a friend or relative,¹ making safe drug disposal crucial in lowering the accessibility to opioids. With each package shipped that contains a prescription opioid, we include a single-use packet of DisposeRx—a product designed to help people easily dispose of medications by rendering them unusable. In addition, our website features a Safe Drug Disposal page (www.serve-you-rx.com/safe-drug-disposal/) that instructs members on the other multiple ways drugs can be safely removed from the home.


³ 2017 Key Substance Use and Mental Health Indicators in the United States: Results from the 2016 National Survey on Drug Use and Health. SAMHSA.gov.