TAKING THE LEAD ON ATTACKING THE OPIATE EPIDEMIC

The state’s drug overdose (OD) rate outpaces the national average, fueled by the rise in prescription opioid abuse and the use of illicit opioids, like heroin, and synthetic black-market opioids, like fentanyl. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported Louisiana had the 19th highest age adjusted opioid OD rate in 2015.

**Senate Bill 55 by Sen. Fred Mills (R–Parks)** was LSMS-requested legislation for all prescribers which addresses underutilization of the Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) as well as Continuing Education requirements. Louisiana’s PMP is a useful tool that can help improve patient care and reduce prescription drug abuse and “doctor shopping.” SB 55 requires that upon initial application or upon renewal of a controlled dangerous substance license from the Board of Pharmacy, a prescribing practitioner shall automatically be registered in the PMP.

It also requires all prescribers, or their delegate, to access and review a patient’s record prior to initially prescribing any opioids to that patient and access the PMP again every 90 days if the patient’s course of treatment involves that opioid for more than 90 days.

This requirement shall NOT apply if:

- The drug is prescribed or administered to a hospice patient or to any other patient who has been diagnosed as terminally ill.
- The drug is prescribed or administered for the treatment of cancer-related chronic or intractable pain.
- The drug is ordered or administered to a patient being treated in a hospital.
- The PMP is inaccessible or not functioning properly due to an internal or external electronic issue.
- No more than a single seven-day supply of the drug is prescribed or administered to a patient.
All prescribers in La. must obtain three continuing education credit hours as a prerequisite of license renewal in the first annual renewal cycle after Jan. 1, 2018 and the three hours shall be considered among the credit hours currently required by the prescribers' licensing board. Successful completion of this requirement once shall satisfy the requirement in full.

The continuing education criteria shall involve drug diversion training, best practice prescribing of controlled dangerous substances, appropriate treatment options for addiction, and any other matters regarding the prescribing of controlled dangerous substances deemed appropriate by the board.

A prescriber who has a controlled substance license shall be exempt from the CE requirements for license renewal if he submits to his licensing board a certification form attesting that he has not prescribed, administered, or dispensed a controlled dangerous substance during the entire reporting period.

This legislation encountered no opposition throughout the process.

**Final Action: Signed by the Governor (Act 76) – EFFECTIVE JANUARY 1, 2018**

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