

Overcoming Pharmacy Barriers: A Rapid Response Playbook for Buprenorphine Prescribers



THE PHARMACIST HAS QUESTIONS

If the pharmacist has questions about your buprenorphine prescription, but has not yet declined to dispense, here is how you can respond:

ANSWER the inquiry. PROMPTLY.

The prescriber should try to resolve any questions from the pharmacist related to the prescription to ensure the patient gets their medication as soon as possible. If the pharmacist is unable to resolve their concerns, they may decline to fill the prescription.

CLARIFY AND DOCUMENT.

The *Addressing Issues at the Pharmacy with Buprenorphine Prescriptions* toolkit may help pinpoint the pharmacist's concern. Ensure that you document any conversation with the pharmacist in the patient's chart. If conversing with the pharmacist, clarify whether they will now dispense.



THE PHARMACIST WON'T FILL

If the pharmacist has declined to fill your buprenorphine prescription, here is what to do:

CONTACT the pharmacist. PROMPTLY.

If the pharmacist has not contacted the prescriber, the prescriber should contact them as soon as possible.

DOCUMENT.

Use the toolkit to pinpoint the concern. Ask for a copy of any decisions not to fill, including the reasoning. Document the conversation in the patient's chart.

ENGAGE the patient.

Ensure the patient is kept updated about the prescription status.

ESCALATE/APPEAL if necessary.

In some cases, there may be an avenue for you to appeal the pharmacist's decision. Consider this step if the pharmacist continues to decline to dispense. Many retail chains have pharmacy refusal teams that you can contact. Consider a complaint to the state pharmacy board for egregious issues. ASAM staff can help determine if that is a step you should consider.

REPORT to ASAM.

If you are unable to resolve a dispute over a prescription, please use [this form](#) to report the instance to ASAM for each patient and occurrence.



THE PHARMACIST REPORTS NO MEDICATION IN STOCK

If the pharmacist says that they do not have any stock of buprenorphine, **ask when/if the stock will be replenished, if there are therapeutic substitutions available in the interim, and if the problem is distributor related.** If the pharmacy is worried about crossing a specific distributor-set numeric threshold, encourage them to consult with their distributor about their threshold modification process and possible adjustment for buprenorphine products for opioid use disorder. Consider working collaboratively with the pharmacy by providing your practice's anticipated monthly buprenorphine prescribing volume in the aggregate.



THE PHARMACIST SAYS IT'S RELATED TO DEA SCRUTINY

Consult the toolkit for communications from the DEA about this issue.



IS THE PHARMACIST REQUIRED TO DISPENSE MY PRESCRIPTION?

No. A pharmacist may decline to fill a prescription for reasons including concerns about the legitimacy of a prescription that cannot be resolved, and if the patient exhibits signs of adverse effects from buprenorphine.



WHAT IF I AM DEALING WITH AN ISSUE NOT LISTED HERE?

Contact ASAM by emailing us about the issue at advocacy@ASAM.org.