



Blue Cross  
Blue Shield  
Blue Care Network  
of Michigan

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## Blue Cross and BCN fight the opioid epidemic

Prescription painkillers, or opioids, can give relief to people who've had surgery, traumatic injuries or chronic pain. But they can destroy lives when relief gives way to addiction.

- Every day **more than 1,000 people are treated in the emergency department** nationwide for misusing prescription opioids.
- **On average, 192 Americans die every day from an opioid overdose (includes heroin and prescription opioids).**
- More Americans died in 2016 from opioids than have ever died in a single year from HIV, gun violence or car crashes.
- About 670,000 Americans died from opioid overdoses from 2000 to 2016.
- In 2016, Michigan health care providers wrote **11 million prescriptions for opioid drugs** – enough to give every resident a bottle of more than 80 pills.
- Nationally, Michigan ranks **10<sup>th</sup> for highest rates of prescribing opioids and 18<sup>th</sup> for most overdose deaths.**

Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are working to lower these numbers and protect our members.

### Seeing results:

- Successes from 2017 to 2018, based on commercial membership per month:
  - 18% reduction in opioid prescriptions
  - 24% reduction in number of opioid pills dispensed
  - 27% reduction in fentanyl products dispensed
  - 22% reduction in long-acting oxycodone and oxymorphone use
- Since 2014, the **number of members receiving the dangerous "Triple Threat" drug combination has decreased by 93%**. This combination of opioids, benzodiazepines and Soma® taken together can slow or even stop a person's breathing.
- About **900,000 fewer opioid pills have been dispensed** since 2014, due to the Doctor Shopper and "Triple Threat" initiatives.

# A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY

## Prevention

**Ensure safe and appropriate use:** We manage our drug lists and create programs that allow appropriate opioid use when needed, while minimizing potential misuse and abuse. We target highly abused opioids with tools including prior authorization, refill restrictions and quantity limits to help prevent stockpiling and excessive quantities of pain pills. We limit coverage of opioid prescriptions to 30-day supplies per fill. Members starting opioid therapy and receiving a short-acting opioid have the first fill limited to a five-day supply. Members need prior authorization to increase therapy to 90 morphine milligram equivalents, or MME, per day.

**Encourage e-prescribing:** Since 2015, our rate of e-prescribing for controlled substances has increased by nearly 40 percentage points. Blue Cross gives doctors incentives through our value-based payment programs to increase electronic prescribing of controlled substances to protect against fraud and abuse.

## Fraud Detection and Abuse Intervention

**Identify at-risk members:** Our pharmacists monitor claims to identify members receiving a dangerous and highly addictive drug combination commonly referred to as the "Triple Threat," and we notify prescribing doctors.

**Stop doctor shopping:** A Doctor Shopper Initiative identifies members who obtain opioid prescriptions from multiple prescribers and pharmacies. We notify doctors of their patients' behavior and encourage them to use their state's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program when starting or continuing opioid therapy.

**Detect outliers:** We apply algorithms to integrated pharmacy and medical claims data to identify prescribers, pharmacies and members with above average opioid prescriptions or use. Based on the findings, we may remove prescribers and pharmacies that are extreme outliers from our networks.

## Treatment

We continue to support medication-assisted treatment and interventions that identify patients in need, in the emergency room or elsewhere, and quickly begin comprehensive treatment.

**Integrate care:** Our medical directors, behavioral health specialists, case managers, pharmacists and corporate investigators review pharmacy and medical claims of members with behavior reflecting opioid misuse or abuse to coordinate treatment referrals and ongoing care management.

**Improve quality of care:** The CLIMB pilot program uses innovative approaches such as sober coaching, in-home treatment and an online mobile app to help improve treatment adherence, increase use of medication-assisted treatment and minimize relapse.

**Help members who overdose:** Our opioid and heroin overdose pilot program uses real-time hospital discharge data to enable quick intervention. Behavioral health experts engage members in treatment following an overdose and inform them of available resources.

## Advocacy and Awareness

**Forge partnerships:** Blue Cross is working with doctors, pharmacies, community organizations, policy makers, public health advocates, foundations and employers to fight this epidemic. As a result of these partnerships, we're making opioid use safer, providing more information to help prevent addiction and arming communities to fight back.

**Be Rx Safe:** We participate in this campaign with Michigan's doctors and hospitals to build awareness of the opioid problem and treatment options.

**Drug disposal:** Blue Cross makes significant efforts to educate and inform the public about how to get rid of unnecessary medications, including sponsoring drug take-back kiosks at certain Walgreens locations.

**Engage and support community groups:** Blue Cross and the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation joined the Michigan Opioid Partnership, a public-private collaborative including the state of Michigan and key nonprofit funders. The mission is to decrease Michigan opioid overdoses and deaths through prevention, treatment, harm reduction and sustained recovery. Nearly \$5 million will be distributed to organizations statewide to address the crisis.

**Collaborate with providers:** Blue Cross and the Michigan Opioid Prescribing Engagement Network work with our physician groups to improve statewide prescribing practices and utilization. M-OPEN works with doctors and hospitals to decrease new opioid prescriptions to surgical patients and raise awareness of the dangers of opioids.