



Blue Cross  
Blue Shield  
Blue Care Network  
of Michigan

Confidence comes with every card.®



## 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. Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan and Blue Care Network are working to improve prevention and treatment of opioid use disorder, and protect our members.

### Seeing results

- Successes from 2012 to 2019, based on commercial membership per month:

Improvement	2018 to 2019	2012 to 2019
Reduction in opioid prescriptions	16%	63%
Reduction in number of opioid pills dispensed	20%	70%
Reduction in fentanyl products dispensed	25%	81%
Reduction in long-acting oxycodone and oxymorphone use	20%	78%

- 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 65 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.

# A COMPREHENSIVE STRATEGY

## 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, family systems analysis, education on the importance of continued care 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.

**Expanding access:** We launched a program in September 2019 to train providers on the delivery of medication-assisted treatment. Providers can earn incentives to establish MAT as a new service in their offices and earn value-based reimbursement to continue delivering that treatment. Our goal is to expand the network of MAT providers to offer statewide access to this treatment by the end of 2021.

**Support through team-based care:** Medication-assisted treatment providers are receiving additional incentives for training their care teams on how best to support MAT patients through a team-based approach. This gives patients additional support beyond the physician office visits. Bundled payments account for and encourage more comprehensive coordinated team care for our members.

**Expanding initial treatment:** Through a partnership with the Michigan Opioid Prescribing Engagement Network and Michigan Emergency Department Improvement Collaborative, Blue Cross supports the training of emergency department physicians to screen patients for opioid use disorder and start treatment in the emergency department following an overdose. This starts treatment when patients are most vulnerable and offers them medication-assisted treatment and long-term recovery coaching sooner.

**Covering treatment:** We reimburse health care providers for opioid treatment procedure codes, including those for online detoxification treatment.

## 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.

**Engage and support community groups:** Blue Cross and the Blue Cross Blue Shield of Michigan Foundation are working with strategic funding partners and community groups to make a difference in communities across the state.

**Michigan Opioid Partnership:** A public-private collaborative including the state of Michigan and other nonprofit funders who are contributing more than \$8 million to organizations statewide to decrease opioid overdoses and deaths through prevention, treatment, harm reduction and sustained recovery.

**Taking action on opioid and prescription drug abuse:** Blue Cross, the BCBSM Foundation and Michigan Department of Health and Human Services awarded \$300,000 to five regional perinatal quality collaboratives to address perinatal opioid use disorder.

**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.