

CLAC GUIDELINE: Variation to Pharmacotherapy Takeaway – SUBOXONE WEEKLY

This guideline updates CLAC policy for approving variations to regular pharmacotherapy takeaway for stable clients on **buprenorphine/naloxone (Suboxone)** treatment only. It does not apply to buprenorphine alone (Subutex) or to methadone which will continue to be assessed by the full CLAC process.

It details the specified criteria for stability to be met to allow the Chief Poisons Inspector (CPI) discretion to approve increases **without referring every approval through the full CLAC process.**

CLIENTS IN A REMOTE COMMUNITY are NOT COVERED by this guideline. Such requests will continue to be assessed through the full CLAC process.

The Chief Poisons Inspector may decide to refer any application through the full CLAC process.

Rationale

For safety reasons, opiate pharmacotherapy treatment is based on the principle of supervised dosing with takeaways as a privilege for a stable client who has made significant progress in reducing or eliminating illicit opiate use, and to facilitate life activities such as employment or study.

Present guidelines allow for clients on Suboxone on daily dosing to be prescribed takeaway doses up to a maximum of three per week, and for clients on alternate daily dosing no more than one takeaway dose per week. This number can only be exceeded through application to the CLAC for special authorisation.

Clinical experience with Suboxone indicates greatly reduced potential for risks of diversion, self administration by injection, overdose/death of client or others, with potential for more clients on Suboxone to safely be prescribed more takeaway doses. The process is therefore being simplified for stable clients on Suboxone to graduate to dosing once a week over a minimum period of 32 weeks. In practice, the period will be longer as each application will be lodged and assessed shortly after the criteria have been met for the relevant period.

DAILY DOSING: may gradually increase prescribed takeaway doses **from 3/week to 6/week** - ie pharmacy dosing once a week - at a rate of **one extra takeaway for every 8 weeks of continued stability.**

ALTERNATE DAY DOSING (includes 4 day a week dosing): may gradually increase prescribed takeaway doses **from 1/week to 3/week** - ie pharmacy dosing once a week - at a rate of **one extra takeaway for every 16 weeks of continued stability.**

Assessment

For authorisation of **each** takeaway increase by the Chief Poisons Inspector, the following information **MUST** be confirmed by the applying doctor on the form overleaf, which should be faxed to 8922 7200 or emailed to poisonscontrol@nt.gov.au allowing at least 5 working days for approval. If the CPI decides to refer to the CLAC, the process will require a further week.

Client has:

- **on daily dosing**, received the current number of takeaway doses for at least 8 weeks
- **on alternate day dosing**, received the current number of takeaway doses for at least 16 weeks
- since the previous takeaway increase - continued evidence of :
 - no injecting or using other opiates or illicit drugs, including cannabis
 - urine drug screens free of other opiates or illicit drugs, including cannabis, at least 2 screens
 - no problem with alcohol consumption
 - no diverted pharmacotherapy doses
 - no episodes of intoxication
 - no prescribed benzodiazepines or stimulants
- not missed more than 4 daily or 2 alternate day doses within the past 3 months
- continued stable on the pharmacotherapy program, reliable, keeps review appointments, fulfils the conditions of any contract relating to management
- continued stable mental health, no physical health conditions or other medications reducing safety
- continued adequate safe packaging & storage arrangements for takeaway doses

Application to Chief Poisons Inspector for Variation to Pharmacotherapy Takeaway – SUBOXONE WEEKLY

Patient Name **DOB**

Patient Address

For this patient whom I have been treating with Suboxone since, and who has been on
(date of commencement)
..... mg daily/alt die since
(dose) (date)

I confirm the following:

- receiving number of takeaway doses since (date) (= key date)
- since the key date - continued evidence of :
 - no injecting or using other opiates or illicit drugs, including cannabis
 - urine drug screens free of other opiates or illicit drugs, including cannabis, at least 2 screens
 - no problem with alcohol consumption
 - no diverted pharmacotherapy doses
 - no episodes of intoxication
 - not known to be prescribed benzodiazepines or stimulants.....
- not missed more than 4 daily or 2 alternate day doses within the past 3 months
- keeps all review appointments, fulfils conditions of any contract relating to management
- continued stable mental health, no physical health conditions or other medications reducing safety
- continued safe storage for takeaway doses re children, other adults

AND I consider that can safely care for and use
(name of patient)

..... takeaway Suboxone doses of mg daily/alt die on a regular basis.
(number)

Signature of doctor Name of doctor

Contact email/fax of doctor