

New Jersey Board of Pharmacy Guidance Regarding Emergency Prescription Dispensing For Puerto Rico Evacuees

The Board of Pharmacy recognizes that New Jersey pharmacists are facing unique situations serving Puerto Rico evacuees due to the devastating effects of Hurricanes Irma and Maria on Puerto Rico. The Board advises pharmacists to use their expertise and professional judgment during this emergency and to follow the steps below to help ensure our primary goal of serving patients' health and safety:

- 1) **Prescription Refills:** When presented with an individual who has been displaced by the hurricane with no access to their prescriptions, prescription medications and/or prescribing practitioner, the pharmacist may dispense refills, up to a 30-day supply, for prescription legend drugs and drugs in Schedules III-V. (The Board is temporarily waiving the current limit of a 72-hour emergency supply as per regulation N.J.A.C. 13:39-7.4).

Prior to refilling a prescription under these circumstances, the pharmacist shall obtain suitable identification from the patient or caregiver and shall:

- i. Attempt to verify the prescription with the original prescriber or the original dispensing pharmacy, or using a common prescription management system, where available.
- ii. If the patient has the original bottle, the pharmacist may refill the medication based upon the information presented.
- iii. Attempt to verify information regarding the Schedule III-V prescription using the PMP system.

In all cases, and if the pharmacist is unable to verify the prescription using the options above, the pharmacist must use his or her professional judgment when dispensing pursuant to any emergency refill request. All attempted communications as well as all information regarding the refill must be properly documented either in the pharmacy profile system or by handwritten records, consistent with the Board's recordkeeping requirements set forth in N.J.A.C. 13:39-7.6.

- 2) **Transfer of medication between registered pharmacies:** Medications may be transferred between pharmacies to ensure the continued supply of medication to patients (this scenario may be applicable to chain pharmacies who have a presence in Puerto Rico, and have a centralized patient information database which can be accessed from any pharmacy in the chain regardless of location). All transfers must be clearly documented with the name and registration number of the sending pharmacy and receiving pharmacy, along with the name, strength and quantity of all medications transferred. Documentation must be maintained consistent with the general recordkeeping regulations of the Board, and should be available to the Board upon request.
- 3) **Puerto Rico Evacuee Prescription Payment Options:** If a patient has an existing prescription insurance plan, the pharmacist should attempt to utilize that plan information for reimbursement and copayment determination. However, if the patient is not covered by a prescription insurance plan, the federal government recently activated the Emergency Prescription Assistance Program (EPAP) to assist these individuals.

Under EPAP, individuals who live in Puerto Rico, and do NOT have any form of prescription insurance, should call the **EPAP enrollment hotline at 1-855-793-7470**. They will be asked to provide information to enroll in EPAP to receive prescription services at no cost.

It is the Board's understanding that Express Scripts is handling the processing of claims for this (Puerto Rico) activation of the EPAP. If you have any questions, or require any additional information, please feel free to contact Express Scripts directly at **1-855-793-7470**.

More information about this activation of EPAP is available on this website:

<https://www.phe.gov/Preparedness/planning/epap/Pages/affected-areas.aspx>

This guidance expires 90 days from the date of issuance but will be reviewed by the Board and extended if circumstances require.

If any other questions or situations occur, please do not hesitate to contact the Board office for guidance.

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New Jersey Board of Pharmacy