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Governor

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DEPARTMENT OF PROFESSIONAL
AND FINANCIAL REGULATION
OFFICE OF PROFESSIONAL AND OCCUPATIONAL REGULATION
BOARD OF PHARMACY
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Anne L. Head, Esq.
Commissioner

Geraldine L. Betts
Administrator

February 11, 2021

To: Joint Standing Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services

Re.: HCIFS Letter to the Board of Pharmacy Dated April 6, 2020 pursuant to L.D. 2116, An Act to Improve Prescription Information Access

Dear Senator Sanborn, Representative Tepler and Members of the Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee:

During the 129th Maine Legislature, Representative Margaret Craven submitted L.D. 2116, "An Act to Improve Prescription Information Access." On March 12, 2020, the bill was voted out of Committee as, Ought Not to Pass. The Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services Committee sent a letter to the Board of Pharmacy requesting that it reach out and educate licensees on assisting the visually impaired patient. That letter is attached.

Unfortunately, the Board of Pharmacy was unable to immediately act on the Committee's request due to its need to focus on matters related to the public health emergency and the coronavirus pandemic. The board realized that it would not be able to respond by the deadline and contacted the committee analyst, Colleen McCarthy Reid, to request an extension.

The Board understands that the Committee's request is important to ensure that visually impaired patients are provided with the necessary assistance to safely manage and take their prescribed medication. The Board is pleased to report to the Committee that its request has been fulfilled. Attached is the Practice Outreach Communication. The [Maine Board of Pharmacy Practice Outreach Communication to Licensees on Accessible Drug Labeling Best Practices](#) was sent to all licensees on February 5, 2021.

Again, our apologies for the delay on addressing this very important matter. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Geraldine Betts, Administrator
Maine Board of Pharmacy

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PRACTICE OUTREACH COMMUNICATON
Accessible Drug Labeling Best Practices

To: Licensed Pharmacies, Pharmacists, and Other Board Licensees
From: Bradley Hamilton, R.Ph., Board President and Members of the Maine Board of Pharmacy
Date: February 4, 2021





The 129th Maine Legislature considered [LD 2116 An Act to Improve Prescription Information Access](#). This bill proposed to require a 2-dimensional machine-scannable barcode that allows a patient to digitally access prescription information to appear on the prescription label. The Committee on Health Coverage, Insurance and Financial Services (HCIFS) voted the bill out of Committee as Ought Not To Pass and sent a letter requesting that the Board reach out to licensees about assisting consumers who are visually impaired.

This Practice Outreach Communication is in response to that request. We strongly encourage pharmacies and pharmacists to voluntarily develop and employ best practices in readiness to respond to customers that are visually impaired or who have low vision and require assistance with viewing and reading their prescription drug label and vital relevant information.

As recommended by the NCD, some options may be:

Did you know that –

“In 2012, Congress tasked the National Council on Disability (NCD) with a public awareness campaign regarding accessible drug labeling best practices under the Food and Drug Administration Safety and Innovation Act (FDSIA).

-  Hard Copy Large Print or Braille
-  Digital Voice or Text to Speech Recorder
-  Radio Frequency Identification Device
-  Smart Devices and Computers

Section 904 of FDSIA authorized the U.S. Access Board to convene a stakeholder working group to develop these best practices. On July 2013, the working group convened by the U.S. Access Board released its list of best practices for making prescription drug container label information accessible to people who are blind or visually impaired or elderly. The best practices offered are advisory only.

NCD developed a [trifold brochure summarizing these best practices](#) and requested pharmacies and pharmacy associations disseminate the information to their affiliates and members. Individuals are welcome to print and utilize the brochure in conversations with their own local pharmacies to increase awareness of the best practices. NCD also released a radio public service announcement (PSA) about the best practices and placed it in several large city markets, which is available for download on NCD’s website.”

For information on the best practices; to listen to NCD's radio PSA; or to access NCD's brochure and other fact sheets, visit: [NCD - Publications-2016](#)

Other available resource for the visually impaired is [the Iris Network](#) located at 189 Park Ave., Portland ME 04102, (207) 774-6273 info@theiris.org

“See to My Safety” Public Awareness Campaign about Accessible Drug Labeling

CAMPAIGN FACT SHEET

Every year, millions of people in the United States rely on prescription medications to sustain their health, and doctors write as many as 3 billion prescriptions annually. Nearly 14 million Americans, most of whom are 65 years of age or older, have low vision or are blind, and for these individuals, not being able to clearly read a prescription label can result in unnecessary injury or even death.

The goal of the National Council on Disability (NCD)’s “See to My Safety” Public Awareness Campaign is to promote the knowledge of the availability of best practices regarding accessible prescription medication labels. To date, the awareness campaign includes an informational brochure and an audio public service announcement (PSA), as well as regular distribution of news of pharmacies voluntarily offering accessible drug labeling, and NCD needs your help to get the word out!

Those Who May Be Interested in The Campaign:

- An estimated 14 million Americans – most of whom are 65 years of age or older – who have low vision or are blind.
- Patients, caregivers, service/advocacy organizations or groups representing the interests of patients, consumers or caregivers.
- Your local pharmacy, pharmacy chains, grocery store pharmacies, hospitals, neighborhood clinics, urgent care facilities, and/or other healthcare entities (including those operated by the Federal government, individual states, churches, and charity organizations).
- Healthcare professionals, including physicians and physician assistants, pharmacists, nurses, and the professional societies that serve them.
- State regulatory bodies, including professional licensure and oversight boards.
- Healthcare insurers.

What You Can Do:

- Download copies of and distribute the accessible prescription drug label brochure to health care providers, advocacy groups, and pharmacies in your area.
- Ask your local radio station to read or play NCD’s 30-second public service announcement about the increased availability of accessible medication prescription labels.
- Use social media to spread the word about the increased availability of accessible prescription medication labels using the hashtag #SeeToMySafety
- Ask your local officials to declare a “See to My Safety Day” public health and awareness campaign in your state, county, or city.

Sample Radio Public Service Announcement (PSA) Script

Use: Immediate / until further notice

Time: 30 seconds

Agency: National Council on Disability

Title: “See to My Safety” PSA Awareness Initiative

Download or Listen:

<http://ncd.gov/publications/2016/best-practices-accessible-prescription-drug-labeling>

Script: The Food and Drug Administration Safety Innovation Act makes it possible for consumers to receive information about their prescriptions in accessible formats, making instructions easier to follow if you are blind or have a vision-related disability. Accessible prescription drug labels equal greater independence. For more information, consumers should speak with their pharmacist about the options available to them.

Main Point: Older adults with vision impairments are three times more likely to have trouble managing medications compared to people who have no vision loss. The *National Council on Disability* is pleased to be working with consumers, advocates, forward-thinking physicians and pharmacists from across the nation in an effort to increase awareness about the availability of accessible prescription drug labels to those at risk of taking the wrong medicine or incorrect doses of medication that can lead to a preventable overdose or the mistreatment of health problems, emergency hospitalization or, in the worst-case scenario, death.

Accessible Prescription Drug Labeling Brochure

<http://ncd.gov/publications/2016/best-practices-accessible-prescription-drug-labeling>

Additional Resources

- Recommendations of the United States Access Board
<http://goo.gl/mp2pnM>
- Accessible Rx Drug Labeling Fact Sheet (Created by AccessAMed)
<http://www.accessamed.com/downloads/AccessaMed%20White%20Paper%202013.pdf>
- Accessible Prescription Drug Labeling Fact Sheet (Created by En-Vision America)
<http://www.envisionamerica.com/wp/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/accessible-prescription-labels-fact-sheet.pdf>
- Accessible Rx Drug Labeling Best Practices (Created by the American Council of the Blind)
<http://acb.org/node/1427>

For more information, go to:

<http://ncd.gov/publications/2016/best-practices-accessible-prescription-drug-labeling>