

Subject: Health Benefits Exception Committee Renewals

Number: HB-MEMO-2020-005

Date Issued: March 19, 2020

Effective Date: Immediately

Issuer: Andrew Fuller
Manager, Health Benefits
Pharmaceutical and Health Benefits Branch
Alberta Health

Distribution: **Community and Social Services**
Delivery Services Portfolio

Contact: Andrew Fuller, Manager, Health Benefits

BACKGROUND

Due to the rapidly evolving situation regarding the COVID-19 pandemic and staffing capacities, the Health Benefits Exception Committee (HBEC) is providing an update regarding exception drug coverage.

To reduce in person contact between clients, workers, staff and/or healthcare providers the HBEC will extend exception coverage by 6 months for previously approved drug products that have a termination date between March 1, 2020 and August 30, 2020.

- Only clients with active health benefits and existing approvals will be extended.
- Only medications that have been prescribed for long-term use will be extended.
 - If the drug product was prescribed for a one-time dispense or to treat a short-term condition it will not receive extension of coverage.
- If new medications are initiated or changes are made to the medication used, a new HBEC request will be required.
- Due to staffing capacities, clients will not be informed of the 6-month extension.
- The procedures for new exception requests through HBEC will continue as normal.
- Communications are being developed to inform all outpatient hospital and community pharmacies of the HBEC coverage extension.

The HBEC will be distributing a summary document (i.e. excel spreadsheet) in the next few days to the shared email address of all District Offices which will include the list of clients and the drug products that have been granted extended coverage.

PROCEDURE

If a client contacts their worker or District Office due to the termination of a previously approved drug exception request, the worker/staff member should:

1. Review the summary document that was sent to the shared email address of their DO.
2. If clients' name and drug product request is listed within the summary document, inform the client that Alberta Blue Cross (ABC) is currently processing the additional 6-months of exception coverage and it may take a few days for the extension to become active.
 - a. If required, the client can inform the pharmacy of the extension approval.
3. If the clients' name and/or drug product is not within the summary document, please contact a HBEC program planner at ah.healthbenefitsexceptions@gov.ab.ca.
 - a. Coverage may not have been extended as the original drug product request was not prescribed for long-term use.

For any questions or concerns, please contact HBEC at ah.healthbenefitsexceptions@gov.ab.ca