

Pennsylvania Prescription Drug Monitoring Program: Success Story

In 2014, the Pennsylvania legislature passed the Achieving Better Care by Monitoring All Prescriptions Program (ABC-MAP) Act. The act is intended to improve patient care by electronically providing patient prescription medication history to prescribers and dispensers in order to alert medical professionals to potential dangers in treatment determinations; to make it easier for a patient to obtain a thorough record of their medications; and to aid regulatory agencies in the detection and prevention of fraud, drug abuse, and the criminal diversion of controlled substances.

ABC-MAP was also the catalyst for the establishment of Pennsylvania's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PA PDMP).

Since its launch in 2016, the mission of the PDMP Compliance Team is to facilitate the provision of high-quality and timely data so that providers and pharmacists in Pennsylvania have the latest and most accurate information and tools to make informed clinical decisions.

The team monitors compliance with the regulations outlined in the legislation and serves as a liaison to the Pennsylvania Department of State, state licensing entities, the Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General, and other appropriate enforcement entities.



One way the compliance team monitors and improves data quality is by identifying incorrect record submissions in the PDMP system. An example of an errored record submission is when a data field is missing or invalid. Shortly after the team started its work in December 2019, 99 dispensers were identified with incorrect records.

Combined, these dispensers were responsible for 71.7 percent of the incorrect records in the system. Through research, phone calls, and emails, the compliance team was able to contact the identified dispensers and assist them in correcting the errors.

This effort resulted in a 55 percent reduction in total errors in the system. The compliance team then made referrals of non-compliant dispensers to the Pennsylvania Department of State's pharmacy licensing board. Together, the PDMP's compliance team and the licensing board's investigatory team coordinated further efforts to improve compliance with data-quality requirements.

Backed by the licensing board's authority to penalize noncompliance, nearly every referred dispenser has since become compliant.

Pennsylvania Prescription Drug Monitoring Program: Success Story

Through this joint effort, Pennsylvania was able to reduce the total number of errors by 83 percent in 14 months.

Outreach was a key component in achieving the compliance team's mission to ensure the provision of quality data. Conducting outreach in waves and incorporating both emails and phone calls in their strategy had the best effect. Direct contact by phone calls was particularly advantageous: dispensers who were contacted via phone took the opportunity to learn about the law, regulations, and the procedure for making corrections. The phone calls were regularly cited as beneficial, especially among dispensers who identified themselves as very busy or overwhelmed.

Since the inception of the PA PDMP in 2016, Pennsylvania has seen a significant decrease in opioid-prescribing and risky-prescribing behaviors. And while overdose death rates in Pennsylvania remain high and some issues with the timely and accurate submission of data from prescribers persist, numerous opioid misuse prevention and response initiatives across the state rely on PDMP data for targeted interventions and for the intelligent allocation of resources. In addition, drug-related public policies are often shaped based on PDMP data trends.

This system enhancement initiative will allow the PA PDMP to strengthen the reliability and usefulness of its data, which will ultimately improve data-driven opioid prevention and response activities and help prescribers make more informed clinical decisions using the most recent, accurate, and reliable data available.
