

## **Government Reclassifies Hydrocodone Combination Products, Effective Oct. 6, 2014**

In August 2014, the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) released a final rule that moves Hydrocodone Combination Products (HCPs) from Schedule III to Schedule II of the Controlled Substances Act. HCPs are drugs that contain hydrocodone and specified amounts of other substances, such as acetaminophen or aspirin. Schedule II drugs, substances, or chemicals are defined as drugs with a high potential for abuse. The new rule became effective on Oct. 6, 2014.

### **Pharmacy and Member Awareness**

For Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Montana (BCBSMT) members with Prime Therapeutics as their pharmacy benefits manager, Prime has taken a number of steps to avoid member service disruption:

- Prime's Networks department issued a fax blast on Sept. 26, 2014, to all network pharmacies on the new classification of HCPs.
- Member letters were mailed beginning Sept. 29, 2014, to current mail-order pharmacy users with open refill prescriptions for drugs containing hydrocodone – the letters explain the change and what members may need to do.
- Prime call center agents have been provided with information on the new rule so that they are prepared to address member questions or concerns.

### **What Prescribers May Need to Know**

Rules that apply to Schedule II controlled substances may necessitate a change in the way in which providers prescribe HCPs. For example, HCP prescriptions written on or after Oct. 6, 2014, cannot have refills and can no longer be sent by phone, fax or electronic prescribing (in some states). Prescriptions must be hand-signed (computer-generated signatures will not be accepted by pharmacies). Depending on state laws, additional restrictions may apply. For further details on the final rule, we encourage you to visit [Federal Register](#) website.

Prime Therapeutics LLC is a pharmacy benefit management company. BCBSMT contracts with Prime to provide pharmacy benefit management, prescription home delivery and specialty pharmacy services. BCBSMT, as well as several other independent Blue Cross and Blue Shield Plans, has an ownership interest in Prime.

The information mentioned here is for informational purposes only and is not a substitute for the independent medical judgment of a physician. Physicians are instructed to exercise their own medical judgment. Pharmacy benefits and limits are subject to the terms set forth in the member's certificate of coverage which may vary from the limits set forth above. The listing of any particular drug or classification of drugs is not a guarantee of benefits. Members should refer to their certificate of coverage for more details, including benefits, limitations and exclusions. Regardless of benefits, the final decision about any medication is between the member and their health care provider.