

# Treatment Involving Prescription of Opioids in Virginia

The United States has been experiencing an epidemic of opioid use disorder, opioid overdose hospitalizations and deaths. As a result, the Department of Health and Human Services declared it a “Nationwide Public Health Emergency” to enable a multisector response from different sectors including health care, public health, and safety agencies (Hedberg, 2019). This prompted the need for enhanced opioid use disorder (OUD) treatment. In their study Kravitz-Wirtz et al. (2020), fatal drug overdoses increased notably over the last two decades, with the two-thirds of all drug overdose fatalities being involved with opioid.

## Brief Executive Summary

A BILL to amend and reenact § 54.1-2910.3:1 of the Code of Virginia, relating to Medicaid participants; treatment involving prescription of opioids; payment.

The bill will prohibit healthcare providers from requiring Medicaid recipients to pay out-of-pocket costs for some opioid-related treatment. This bill will cover the prescription for pain management and the prescription of buprenorphine-related products, methadone, and other opioids replacements that have been approved by the US Food and Drug Administration for treatment of opioid addiction. The bill further requires that the healthcare providers who do not participate in Medicaid to offer written notice to the Medicaid recipients providing information that their services are covered by the Medicaid and that the provider does not participate in Medicaid.

## Key Issues

- ❖ The costs associated with opioid treatment is a significant barrier to access for Medicaid recipients.
- ❖ Pharmacological-based treatment is an effective treatment for opioid addiction.
- ❖ Healthcare provider who do take Medicaid tend to reluctant to accommodate Medicaid recipients due to lower reimbursement rates.

## Recommendations

- ❖ It is important to support the bill due to its impact on increasing access to affordable opioid-related treatments.
- ❖ It is crucial to encourage healthcare providers to take part in Medicaid since it helps ensure that all Medicaid recipients receive the care that they need.