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Department of Commerce,  
Community, and  
Economic Development

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

**For Immediate Release**

**19-003**

## **URGENT NOTICE: PHARMACIES URGED TO CONSULT PHYSICIAN BEFORE REFUSING THEIR PATIENT'S OPIOID PRESCRIPTION**

**Friday, January 25, 2019 (Anchorage)** - Managing the opioid epidemic is a key priority when ensuring the safety of all Alaskans. The State of Alaska urges pharmacies to work closely with prescribers to provide appropriate care for their patients, including dispensing of opioids.

"As we work to address the epidemic, it is important that we maintain a balanced approach in our response by continuing to focus on over prescribing and illicit substance use" says Andy Jones, Director for the Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention. "We must ensure Alaskans who are working with their healthcare providers and following treatment guidelines receive the necessary medications needed to manage various chronic health conditions."

Recent federal legislation (21 CFR §1306.04(a)) provides more tools to strike this balance; it does not inhibit practitioners' ability to prescribe controlled substances to patients. "State law places the treatment of pain in the prescriber's hands," says Sara Chambers, director of the Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing. "The prescribing practitioner has full authority to make a diagnosis and determine the appropriate course of treatment, including dosage and quantity of a controlled substance. The patient's best interests must come first, and pharmacists are valued partners in the healthcare team; however, **they are not prescribers and should not refuse to fill a valid prescription without first consulting the prescribing practitioner.**"

Under the new federal legislation, the Drug Enforcement Authority (DEA) recognizes "the proper prescribing and dispensing of controlled substances is upon the prescribing practitioner, but a corresponding responsibility rests with the pharmacist who fills the prescription." A pharmacist may use professional judgment to refuse filling a prescription.

Richard Holt, Pharm. D and chairman of the Alaska Board of Pharmacy (within the Department of Commerce, Community, and Economic Development), encourages pharmacists to follow a proactive and professional method of evaluating dispensation to patients. "The Board of Pharmacy does not recommend refusing prescriptions without first trying to resolve concerns with the prescribing practitioner as the primary member of the healthcare team," says Holt. "We are all licensed healthcare professionals and have a duty to use our knowledge, skill, and judgment to improve patient outcomes and keep them safe."

Questions about prescribing and dispensing controlled substances may be directed to Sara Chambers, director of the Division of Corporations, Business and Professional Licensing, at

[sara.chambers@alaska.gov](mailto:sara.chambers@alaska.gov) or 907-465-2144. Additional information regarding controlled substance prescribing is available online at [pdmp.alaska.gov](http://pdmp.alaska.gov).

Questions regarding opioid addiction may be directed to Andy Jones, director of the Office of Substance Misuse and Prevention at [osmap@alaska.gov](mailto:osmap@alaska.gov) or 907-334-2602. Resources on opioid misuse are available online at [opioids.alaska.gov](http://opioids.alaska.gov).

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