

As pharmacies close, members may lose access to essential medications and other health care services.¹ Access may also be complicated by drug shortages, which may adversely affect drug therapy and cause harm to the member.² Insights were collected from PH-MCO representatives and community pharmacy stakeholders to help providers and members better collaborate with pharmacy partners and navigate challenges with pharmacy closures and drug shortages. The discussion below has been paraphrased for length and clarity.

Navigating Challenges Around Pharmacy Closures

What messaging was given to members around pharmacy closures and medication access from the PH-MCOs?

Recommendations from PH-MCO Representatives

- ➔ Members can go to the MCO website or call the MCO for assistance locating another local pharmacy. These resources can often factor in member preferences (e.g., ZIP Code) to help in identifying a pharmacy. Examples include:
 - » [Gelsinger Health Plan Family](#); Pharmacy Services: 855-552-6028
 - » [Jefferson Health Plans Provider Directory](#); Pharmacy Hotline: 215-991-4300
 - » [Keystone First Pharmacy Locator](#); Member Services: 1-800-521-6860 (TTY 1-800-684-5505)
 - » [Keystone First Community HealthChoices Pharmacy Locator](#); Participant Services: 1-855-332-0729 (TTY 1-855-235-4976)
 - » [PA Health and Wellness Find a Provider](#); Pharmacy: 844-626-6813
 - » Pennsylvania Fee-For-Service Pharmacy Services: 800-537-8862, option 1
 - » [United Healthcare Community Plan Find a Pharmacy](#); Member Services: 800-414-9025 (TTY 711)
 - » [UPMC Health Plan Find a Doctor, Provider, Pharmacy, or Medication](#); Refer to the phone number on the back of the member identification card
- ➔ Mail order options may also be available to the member (MCO-specific).
- ➔ Communication has been sent to providers informing them of what to expect with pharmacy closures and steps they may need to take as a result (e.g., write new prescriptions).

Is Rite Aid initiating the transfer of prescriptions to other pharmacies, especially for members who have refills already ordered?

How else can providers support members in getting prescriptions to their new pharmacy?

Recommendations from Community Pharmacists

- ➔ If someone reaches out to a Rite Aid that has closed, they will be redirected to the pharmacy to which Rite Aid has sold their prescription records.
- ➔ If a member wishes to use another pharmacy, the member may:
 - » Provide their prescribers' contact information to the pharmacy for the pharmacy staff to reach out for new prescriptions
 - » Inform their prescribers to send prescriptions to the new pharmacy
- ➔ Pharmacies may also offer other services (e.g., long-acting injectable medication administration) that can assist prescribers and improve medication access.
- ➔ Communication and collaboration between prescribers and pharmacies are key to a smooth transition.

Are pharmacies limited by the amount of Suboxone®/Subutex® (and other controlled substances) they can carry? Can they order more as Rite Aids close?

Recommendations from Community Pharmacists

- ➔ Wholesalers do set limits. Pharmacies will try to keep enough stock to meet the needs of established patients. Members are encouraged to use the same pharmacy whenever possible.
- ➔ Limits can be appealed, particularly if pharmacies show a growth in patient number and prescription volume. However, this often needs to be a proactive process initiated by pharmacies.

Why does it continue to be so hard to get approval for ADHD medications for adult members, even those who have been on them before?

Recommendations from PH-MCO Representatives

- ➔ A common reason for denials is missing information per the prior authorization criteria (e.g., risk assessment for potential misuse), especially if an outdated prior authorization form is used.
- ➔ Prescribers are encouraged to use the most up-to-date prior authorization forms or submit them electronically.
- ➔ Prior authorizations may need to be resubmitted if a member changes insurance, even if they were approved by their previous MCO. Prescribers should verify with the pharmacy/MCO if a prior authorization needs to be submitted.

What should members or parents do when a prescription is sent for a medication that is out-of-stock due to shortages (e.g., a stimulant)?

Recommendations from Community Pharmacists

- ➔ Certain strengths or formulations may be on shortage.
- ➔ Pharmacies will try to keep enough stock to meet the needs of established patients. Members are encouraged to use the same pharmacy whenever possible.
- ➔ For new patients, prescribers (not the patient) are encouraged to call the pharmacy beforehand to see if a prescription can be fulfilled or discuss available alternatives.

Are there ways to streamline the process for when a member has a prescription for an out-of-stock medication and the alternative medication requires a prior authorization?

Recommendation from PH-MCO Representatives

- ➔ When submitting a prior authorization for an alternative medication, it is helpful for prescribers to note on the prior authorization that the original medication is out-of-stock or on shortage.

Is there a resource to check the availability of a medication or if a medication is currently on shortage?

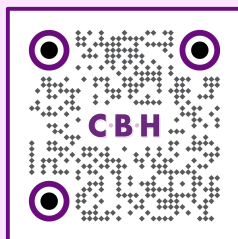
Two reliable and up-to-date shortage lists include:

- ➔ **American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP) Drug Shortages List:** The ASHP list shows shortages reported and confirmed by manufacturers. The list also provides information on estimated duration of shortage, reason for shortage, available products, shortage management strategies, and therapeutic alternatives.
- ➔ **Food & Drug Administration (FDA) Drug Shortages List:** Shortage information is provided to the FDA directly from manufacturers. The list provides information on affected manufacturers and drugs, availability and estimated shortage duration, reason for shortage, and other information as available.

Drug manufacturers may also be able to provide information on the availability of certain products and expected time for resolution.

Other Useful Resources

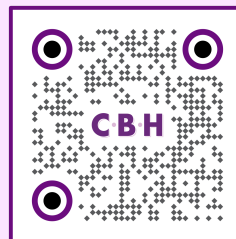
- ➔ Rite Aid: [Pharmacy Closure and Transfer List](#)
Lists closure dates for Rite Aid pharmacies and the information for pharmacies to which prescriptions are being transferred
- ➔ American Society of Health-System Pharmacists (ASHP): [Shortage Resources](#)
- ➔ Community Behavioral Health: [Provider Notice: Pharmacy Guidance: Stimulant Shortages](#)
Provides practical guidance for providers to address stimulant shortages



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Includes medication wallet card, guides, tip sheets, and other valuable resources for members



SCAN ME!

Pharmacy Education and Resources for Providers

Includes the latest pharmaceutical information for CBH providers

For questions or support, please contact cbh.pharmacyinitatives@phila.gov.

¹ Xu, Ruichen; Brown, Alec; and Berenbrok, Lucas A. [Mapping U.S. Pharmacy Closures, January 2014 to March 2024](#). University of Pittsburgh School of Pharmacy.

² Erin R. Fox, Milena M. McLaughlin, [ASHP guidelines on managing drug product shortages](#), *American Journal of Health-System Pharmacy*, Volume 75, Issue 21, 1 November 2018.