



THE STATE
of **ALASKA**
GOVERNOR BILL WALKER

**Department of
Health and Social Services**

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Dear Colleague,

As you are no doubt aware, Alaska, and more broadly our country, are in the midst of an unprecedented epidemic of opioid misuse, addiction, and overdose deaths.

Unfortunately, we don't have the perfect screening tool to identify who will progress from "appropriate" opioid use in the medical setting, toward opioid misuse, addiction and overdose. As such, a thorough weighing of risks, benefits and opioid alternatives is important. In collaboration with Alaska providers, we have developed the enclosed discussion tool in hopes that it will be a useful adjunct for you in educating and caring for your patients. In many cases you'll only need to discuss portions of the document's focus areas, which include:

- Acknowledging that pain can be a normal part of healing
- The infographic about why we must be cautious with opioids
- The graph illustrating effectiveness of over-the-counter pain treatment options
- Alternative pain treatment options patients may want to explore
- The back page covers important discussion points when opioids are considered
 - Risk factors for opioid misuse and addiction
 - Side effects
 - How to reduce risks with the lowest dose for the shortest amount of time
 - How to properly store and dispose of prescription opioids
- Website for more information about opioids

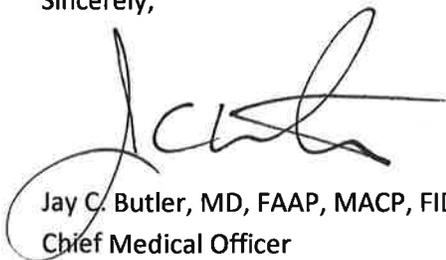
There are many ways providers help prevent opioid misuse and addiction. Prior to prescribing an opioid, review the prescription drug monitoring program (PDMP) to determine if other opioids or respiratory depressants (e.g., benzodiazepines) have been prescribed and assess the patient's personal and family history of substance misuse, prior sexual/emotion/physical trauma, and prior psychiatric illness. When prescribing, encourage your patients to take the lowest amount that provides pain control, for the shortest duration of time, to help minimize the risk. Educate patients on the importance of both safe storage, and of safe disposal when the prescription is no longer needed. If there are no drug take-back

facilities in your community, drug disposal bags are available at your nearest public health center or may be obtained by contacting the Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention at osmap@alaska.gov. The risk of easily accessible opioids in our homes and community can't be overstated.

Printable electronic versions of the discussion tool and other resources are available at www.opioids.alaska.gov. This version was developed for out-patient medical practice settings. If you have suggestions for adapting the tool to make it more suitable to your clinical practice setting, please contact us at osmap@alaska.gov.

We hope that you and your patients will find this tool useful. Please let us know if you have any question or suggestions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jay C. Butler". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "J" and "C".

Jay C. Butler, MD, FAAP, MACP, FIDSA
Chief Medical Officer