State Overview Relating to Prescribing of Controlled Substances to Treat Pain and Clinical Drug Testing

Does Alabama have a Prescription Drug Monitoring Program?

Yes. Alabama has an electronic prescription drug monitoring program, but it does not yet require prescribers or other impacted licensees to access the database prior to prescribing/dispensing. However, the Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners (ALSBME) has authority to require access in a rule or other statement of licensee obligation. Prescribers should check with the PDMP authority to ensure compliance.

Does Alabama have a Pain Management Registration Requirement?

Yes. Alabama has a relatively new requirement for registration by those engaged in pain management as defined by the new law. Prescribers will find a summary of the law using the link in the next column.

Does Alabama have specific operational rules or standards for treating pain with controlled medications? Do these materials make reference to drug testing as part of a monitoring plan for patients using controlled medication?

Yes. Alabama has a rule on the Use of Controlled Substances for the Treatment of Pain. This rule makes reference to the terms of a treatment agreement, including the patient’s obligation to participate in drug screening with appropriate confirmation testing. This rule also makes reference to “laboratory reports” as part of the overall pain management medical record-keeping requirements. Finally, several ALSBME newsletters discuss pain management issues and prescribers should review the same to ensure they are familiar with the ALSBME’s expectations.

Does Alabama have guidance on Office Based Treatment of Opioid Addiction? Do these materials make reference to drug testing as part of the patient treatment plan?

No. Alabama has not adopted a version of the Federation of State Medical Boards’ Model Policy for the Office Based Treatment of Opioid Addiction.

Quick Links & Resources

Alabama Materials

State Prescription Monitoring Program
http://www.adph.org/PDMP/Default.asp?id=1229

State Pain Management Services Registration
http://www.albme.org/painserv.html

Pain Management Standards
http://www.albme.org/painserv.html

ALSBME – Prescribing Issues Web Page
http://www.albme.org/practicematterslnks.html#prescr

ALSBME – Newsletters
http://www.albme.org/newsletters.html

Link to Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners
http://www.albme.org/index.html

IMPORTANT NOTICE TO READERS

Quest Diagnostics does not intend for this document to impart any legal advice. The document is intended to be educational and readers are encouraged to review this information with qualified legal counsel before taking any action relative to controlled substance prescribing and clinical drug testing.

On the Horizon

Alabama does not have new legislation relating directly to the use of controlled substances for the treatment of pain or office based treatment of opioid addiction. However, 2014 promises to be an active year and readers should pay close attention to medical board and legislative announcements.
Role of Clinical Drug Testing in the Management of Patients on Chronic Opioid Therapy

Brief Summary

The Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners (ALSBME) has a set of standards for pain management services. These rules, embodied in a single document available at http://www.albme.org/Documents/Rules/540-X-19.pdf, tell the physician who must register for pain management, who can own a pain management clinic, operational standards, training requirements, and general rules regarding the use of controlled substances to treat pain. These rules cover “chronic, non-malignant” pain states and specifically exclude acute pain and pain related to a malignancy as further described by the rule and related to the specific exclusion of specific entities and physicians from pain management registration requirements.

ALSBME hosts a web page dedicated to pain management information, and in particular the relatively new registration requirements. That page may be found at http://www.albme.org/painserv.html.

Alabama also has a Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (ALPDMP). Alabama requires anyone who dispenses Class II, III, IV, V controlled substances to report the dispensing of these drugs to the database. Mandatory reporting began April 1, 2006.

Alabama does not yet mandate use of the database and current law states: “Practitioners shall have no requirement or obligation to access or check the information in the controlled substances database prior to prescribing, dispensing, or administering medications or as part of their professional practice.” Alabama Code 20-2-214. However, this same law also provides Alabama licensing boards the discretion to adopt rules or state licensee obligations to access the PDMP prior to prescribing. Therefore, Alabama prescriber are encouraged to use the system prior to prescribing controlled medication and should monitor the ALSBME and ALPDMP websites for future modifications to prescribing laws and rules.

Critical State Resources

Alabama State Board of Medical Examiners
http://www.albme.org/

Alabama Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (ALPDMP)
http://www.adph.org/PDMP/Default.asp?id=1229