

Leveraging a new mobile app to expand health care providers' engagement in medication- assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorder

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Background: Opioid misuse has reached a critical point in the United States, with an alarming number of people addicted to prescription opioids and heroin. In response to this public health crisis, the White House launched a multi-faceted initiative to decrease the incidence of opioid misuse. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) is committed to supporting the White House's goal to double the number of physicians within the next 3 years—from 30,000 to 60,000—certified to prescribe buprenorphine in Medication-Assisted Treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorder.

Description: SAMHSA has developed an innovative new mobile application (app) to assist health care providers with MAT for opioid use disorder. This app includes curated multi-media clinical support tools, a comprehensive behavioral health treatment locator, and an interactive “pathway” to becoming Drug Addiction Treatment Act (DATA)-waived to prescribe buprenorphine. To inform the development and utility of this app, SAMHSA conducted extensive formative research with both subject matter experts and projected end users.

Lessons Learned: By creating this “one-stop” app for key clinical resources, SAMHSA has helped fill a void in the availability of mobile tools to support health care providers with MAT practices. In addition, this needs-driven and user-friendly app may help reduce the obstacles in completing the DATA-waiving process and provide clinicians with a mobile tool to improve patient outcomes.

Recommendations: The positive user response to this app suggests that future versions could be expanded to support MAT for other substance use disorders, such as alcohol and tobacco use disorders.

Learning Objectives:

- Discuss the contributing factors and epidemiological trends in the current opioid misuse crisis in the United States.
- Describe some of the obstacles physicians may encounter in becoming Drug Addiction Treatment Act (DATA)-waived for buprenorphine medication-assisted treatment (MAT).
- Identify two ways that the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) MAT mobile application (app) may support health care providers engaged in MAT for opioid use disorder

Learning Areas:

- Administer health education strategies, interventions and programs
- Chronic disease management and prevention
- Communication and informatics
- Ethics, professional and legal requirements
- Implementation of health education strategies, interventions and programs