

Prescription Assistance Programs and Patient Health Literacy Resources

Information for Justice Professionals

by Niki Miller, Senior Research Associate, AHP, Inc.

Many individuals in custody will re-enter communities where Medicaid eligibility has not been expanded. Others may be in the processes of obtaining coverage upon release or may have health plans that require out of pocket contributions for prescriptions and limit the types of drugs they cover. Re-entering individuals are quite likely to have at least one chronic health condition such as asthma, hypertension, or arthritis, which may require medications. When these individuals also need medications for behavioral health conditions, such as depression or bi-polar disorder, and medication to help with recovery from a co-occurring substance use disorder — costs can add up.

In addition to the information below on assistance programs and prescription coverage, it is imperative that re-entering individuals understand how to use and store prescribed medications safely. They need to know about the risk of medication interactions, how to read a prescription label, and how to communicate with prescribers about all these issues.

There are a number of different types of prescription assistance programs (PAPs) that can help defray costs. Some of them also offer useful resources aimed at increasing health literacy for consumers of prescription drugs and helping them obtain medications they need at the lowest possible cost.

Types of Prescription Assistance Programs (PAPs)

- **Need-based Programs**

Low income applicants must not exceed specified earning limits in order to qualify for this type of assistance. These programs vary in the ways they determine eligibility; some consider income and assets, as well as the applicant's existing coverage.

- **Drug Company Sponsored Programs**

Nearly every drug manufacturer offers some level of assistance to people who cannot afford their medications. The degree of assistance available and the process for determining who qualifies can vary.

- **Consumer Discount Programs**

These programs usually offer a discount card or coupons. Some are accepted at affiliated pharmacies while others are accepted everywhere. Enrollment is often free, but they may not offer discounts on all the drugs you need.

Increasing Health Literacy and Informing Consumers

The information that follows includes comprehensive resources that can help individuals locate assistance programs and take advantage of coverage and cost savings. It also lists examples of the different types of PAPs and comprehensive resources that offer information about obtaining and using prescription drugs safely. Some also offer health literacy tools and help locating other health care services and providers that serve low-income individuals. Some of

these sites are sponsored by the drug industry, as a whole, or by specific drug manufacturers. Others are nonprofit organizations or government-sponsored resources, and some merely function as discount 'clubs' that offer a savings card that may only be useful in certain cases. None of the sites listed charge a fee; however, that is not uncommon. Although many sites contain useful information and valuable assistance opportunities, it is important to consider the source. Drug companies offer time-limited assistance programs that cover the cost of expensive medications. Their interests are served when people continue to use their expensive products after they are no longer eligible for assistance. It is always more economical to use a generic drug, if one is available. Many of these resources can be very useful for individuals without health insurance or prescription drug coverage. Each resource should be evaluated with this information in mind.

Comprehensive Resources and Websites

- **MedlinePlus Drugs, Herbs and Supplements:**<https://medlineplus.gov/druginformation.html>

MedlinePlus is the National Institutes of Health's website for patients and their families and friends. It offers reliable, current information on all prescription and over the counter drugs in language that is easy to understand.

- **DailyMed:** <https://dailymed.nlm.nih.gov/dailymed/browse-drug-classes.cfm>

DailyMed is the official provider of FDA label information (package inserts). It provides trustworthy information about all marketed drugs in the United States. The site has a searchable database of all approved human drugs, which lists brand name and generic products available.

- **Medscape Drug Interaction Checker:** <http://reference.medscape.com/drug-interactionchecker>

Medscape is a leading informational resource for healthcare professionals. It offers a drug interaction checker that is easy to use. It flags potential drug interactions and classifies them as serious, moderate or mild. You can search for interactions between two or more medication; results also include potential interactions with over-the-counter medications.

- **Consumer Report's Shopper's Guide to Prescription Assistance Programs:**
<https://www.consumerreports.org/health/resources/pdf/best-buy-drugs/money-saving-guides/english/AssistancePrograms-FINAL-April2007.pdf>

The Shopper's Guide is a brief printable overview of the various types of assistance programs with examples of reliable PAPs. The Consumer Report Best Buy Drug website offers a series of short, printable 'fact sheets' in English and Spanish that explain many aspects of drug pricing and insurance coverage. Drug safety information is also available. **Link to Consumer Report's Best Buy Drugs website:** <http://www.consumerreports.org/cro/health/prescription-drugs/best-buy-drugs/index.htm>

- **Rx Assist** <http://www.rxassist.org/>

The website offers a lot of good information including a database of drug company sponsored, charitable, and local state-sponsored assistance programs you can search by manufacturer, generic or brand name. Their printable brochure is available in English and Spanish, and includes a discount card. They also list free or low cost health care programs and programs that help with co-pays.

From the RxAssist website: *RxAssist is a nationally recognized, web based medication assistance resource center. Established in 1999 with funding from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, RxAssist gives providers, advocates, consumer and caregivers comprehensive, up-to-date information in an easy to use format.*

Examples of Need-based Prescription Assistance Programs

- **Rx Outreach:** <http://rxoutreach.org/patients/>

This is a need-based program that offers individuals who qualify a nonprofit mail order pharmacy service. It provides many types of prescription drugs to low income individuals at a significant discount. The income limits for eligibility are listed below; they are somewhat higher than other need-based programs. The website explains how the program works, how to see if they supply the drugs you need, and how to communicate with prescribers about writing and submitting prescriptions and renewals.

From the Rx Outreach website: *Rx Outreach is a fully-licensed nonprofit mail order pharmacy. You qualify as long as your annual household income is:*

- \$35,640 or less for a single person
- \$60,480 or less for a family of three
- Add \$12,420 for each additional person
- \$48,060 or less for a family of two
- \$72,900 or less for a family of four

Once you enroll, you can check to see if the medicine is on the Rx Outreach drug list. Prescriptions may be written with refills available for up to one year. Ask your doctor about a 180-day supply with one refill or a 90-day supply with three refills. Ask your doctor to e-prescribe your prescription. Many drugs can be purchased for \$20 for a 180-day supply. Or, your physician may fax your prescription and application to 1-800-875-6591. Mail the completed application, your original prescription(s) and your payment to: Rx Outreach P.O. Box 66536 St. Louis, MO 63166-6536. For more information, visit www.rxoutreach.org or call 1-888-RXO-1234 (796-1234), M-F, 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m. Central time.

Link to print out paper applications: <http://rxoutreach.org/wp-content/uploads/current/AppOnly.pdf>

- **Needy Meds:** <http://www.needy meds.org/>

This is a non-profit organization that provides a free prescription drug card discount card to eligible individuals and a lot of other informational tools, including help locating low cost services and providers, and information on government programs including Medicaid and Medicare. It has a very helpful state by state listing of locally sponsored assistance programs which includes medical equipment loan programs, supports and benefits for people with HIV, assistance and counseling for Medicare beneficiaries, and more.

From the NeedyMeds website: *NeedyMeds is a 501(c)(3) national non-profit information resource dedicated to helping people locate assistance programs to help them afford their medications and other healthcare costs. Mission Statement: NeedyMeds educates and empowers those seeking affordable healthcare. Vision Statement: Our vision is affordable healthcare for all. How we do it: NeedyMeds, a national non-profit, achieves its mission by providing information on healthcare programs, offering direct assistance and facilitating programs. NeedyMeds is funded by small grants, donations, sponsorships, subscriptions to PAPTracker, and syndication of some of our database information. NeedyMeds also works with the patient assistance programs of several pharmaceutical distributors.*

Drug Company Sponsored Programs and Sites

- **The Partnership for Prescription Assistance:** <https://www.pparx.org/>

This is sponsored by the drug industry's primary trade group, The Pharmaceutical Research and Manufacturers Association. The site also claims affiliations with 1,300 national and local organizations that help spread the word about assistance programs and enroll people who qualify and links to 475 public and private prescription assistance programs, including 180 sponsored by drug companies.

From the Partnership for Prescription Assistance website:

Our mission is to increase awareness of patient assistance programs and boost enrollment of eligible individuals. We offer a single point of access to more than 475 public and private programs, including about 200 programs offered by biopharmaceutical companies. We've helped millions of Americans to get prescription drugs for free or at very low cost drugs.

Examples of Sponsored Assistance for Specific Medications

- **Renckitt Benkheiser Here to Help Program:** <https://www.suboxone.com/treatment-plan/patient-support>

The program provides free Saboxone for up to 12 months. U.S. citizens 16 or older, without coverage can apply if their earnings are within income limits (about \$2,500 a month or less for a single person). The application has a section for the prescriber. They can only see 3 patients who are receiving this assistance. **Link to printable application forms:** http://rxassist.org/search/prog-details-printer?program_Id=386&Drug_Id=2217&Company_Id=173&PD_Id=386

There is also offer a discount card program for eligible patients who have insurance, or uninsured patients who don't qualify for the *Here to Help* program. It covers up to \$75 a month towards co-pays for new patients with coverage and a larger proportion of the costs to uninsured patients (a maximum savings of \$230 per month). **Link to savings cards:** <http://www.suboxone.com/treatment-plan/savings-card?cid=subx>

- **Zubsolv Patient Assistance Program:** <http://www.needymeds.org/brand-drug/name/Zubsolv>

Less expensive generic buprenorphine formulations are now available. Orexo is one of the companies that makes a less expensive buprenorphine product - Zubsolv. Their assistance program is administered by *NeedyMeds*. U.S. citizens may apply to receive free medication for up to one year with a 6 month renewal process. **Link to application forms:** <http://www.needymeds.org/papforms/zubpae1267.pdf> They also offer a discount card good towards a maximum savings of \$225 on each purchase of a monthly supply. **Link to savings cards:** <https://www.zubsolv.com/zubsolv/patient-savings/>

- **Alkermes Vivitrol Co-pay Assistance Program:** <https://www.vivitrol.com/Savings>

Patients 18 years or older can apply for the Vivitrol Co-pay Savings card if they are uninsured or have commercial insurance. The co-pay program does not accept applications from patients who are covered by any government or public health benefit program including: Medicaid, Medicaid Managed Care or Alternative Benefit Plans under the Affordable Care Act; Medicare, including Medicare Part D; Medigap; Veterans Administration; Department of Defense; TriCare; or any similar state programs. Alkermes also offers patient support through their *Touchpoints* website, including a program where needy patients can apply to receive Vivitrol at no cost. The site offers other supports—for locating providers and for care transitions, etc.: <https://www.vivitrol.com/HCP/VivitrolResources/Touchpoints>

Touchpoints enrollment form: https://www.vivitrol.com/Content/pdf/Standard_Enrollment_Form.pdf

Examples of Discount Card and Coupon Sites

- **GoodRx:** <https://www.goodrx.com/my-rx/register>

The site offers a free prescription drug discount card or a free app you can download that functions like a discount card but with enhancements, such as a mapping tool that compares prices of a medication at nearby retail pharmacies. It is as decent 'shopper's tool' that may yield some measure of cost savings.

From the GoodRx website: *GoodRx will show you prices, coupons, discounts and savings tips for your prescription at pharmacies near you. If you're uninsured, it's easy to get a better price. While prices for most drugs at pharmacies are very high for the uninsured patient, there are many ways to save 80% or more – coupons, savings tips, pharmacy or manufacturer discounts, cheaper alternative drugs, or just asking for a better price. If you have insurance, your co-pay might not be the best price. Plus, many plans have high deductibles or limited formularies that don't cover the drugs you need. Hundreds of generic medications are available for \$4 or even free without insurance. Download [GoodRx's iPhone or Android app](#) to get drug prices and coupons on the go. If you prefer, GoodRx can send you a [discount savings card...](#)*

- **PharmacyCard.org:** http://pharmacycard.org/pharmacy_reg.php?pr=1005

The site offers a free prescription drug discount card accepted at participating pharmacies. It has a drug price and pharmacy finder that allows you to look up any medication to see if a discount is available.

From the PharmacyCard.org website: *PharmacyCard.org is a privately held company that was founded in early 2010 to provide access to discount health benefits through the distribution of the free prescription discount card to the many under and uninsured Americans. Although it once started as an online venture, today the distribution model has grown to include non-profit organizations, municipalities, hospitals, insurance companies, universities, groups and agents to make the card as widely available as possible to those that need assistance. The PharmacyCard.org prescription discount card is widely regarded as the best discount program for consumers.*

- **HelpRx.info:** <http://www.helprx.info/about-us>

The site offers a free prescription drug discount card accepted at participating pharmacies, a searchable database, manufacturer's coupons, guides, resources and useful information on specific medicines and conditions. It includes a section on substance use disorders that offers coupons for buprenorphine and disulfiram (Antabuse) and information on overdose prevention and drug safety.

From the Website: *HelpRx.info is the leading provider of prescription discounts, coupons and prescription discount cards. Backed by a strong nationwide pharmacy benefits provider, we offer discounts on over 50,000 drugs at virtually every pharmacy across the U.S.*

- **Internet Drug Coupons.com :**<http://www.internetdrugcoupons.com/>

They offer a discount card and a searchable site for coupons. They include a section on medications for substance use and mental health disorders that offers discounts on Campral, methadone, disulfiram naloxone and Zubsolv (buprenorphine). These discounts may greatly benefit those without coverage.

From the Internet Drug Coupons website: *There are no claim forms, fees, limitations or maximums. We offer all uninsured, underinsured and insured Americans the chance to never pay "out of pocket" costs again and save up to 75% on retail drug prices. Since 2007, we have been helping everyday Americans save on extraordinarily priced prescriptions. We make our money from large pharmaceutical distributors so we will NEVER charge you to get the savings every person deserves. We have been cited in [insurance industry reports](#), and prominent periodicals such as [Forbes](#), [The LA Times](#), [The Wall Street Journal](#), and [The NY Times](#).*