Drug prescribers in Washington must soon convert to tamper-resistant paper

Local News

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OLYMPIA — Special prescription pads intended to increase patient safety and stop people from stealing or altering existing prescriptions will soon be required in our state. With the deadline approaching, state health officials advise prescribers to order tamper-resistant supplies now.

All health care providers who write prescriptions in Washington will have to use tamper-resistant prescription pad paper under a new law that goes into effect July 1. The law, passed in 2009, says all prescription paper or pads must have the state Board of Pharmacy approval seal. More information on the new requirement (www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/trpp) is online.

“Patient safety is our top priority,” said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. “It’s important that prescription medications go to the right patient, and that patients get the correct medication. These new requirements will make prescriptions more secure and harder to alter.”

Vendors (www.doh.wa.gov/hsqa/Profession ... ments/ApprovedVendors.pdf) that can provide tamper-resistant prescription supplies are on the Department of Health Web site. Vendors must show that their prescription paper or pads meet security standards in the law. These standards help prevent copying, altering, and other forms of counterfeiting. The board will only approve paper or pads that include these security features and contain the special seal.

“We want patients to continue getting the prescription medications they need,” said Karen Jensen, assistant secretary at the agency. “It’s important to consider this law in advance so prescribers don’t waste money on pads that don’t meet requirements and so they’re able to write valid paper prescriptions when the law goes into effect.”

More than 53,000 health professionals in 13 different professions are licensed to write prescriptions in the state. This includes advanced registered nurse practitioners, certified registered nurse anesthetists, physicians, physician assistants, certified physician assistants, osteopathic physicians and assistants, dentists, veterinarians, naturopathic physicians, optometrists, podiatric physicians, and pharmacists.

The security features in the new prescription pads and paper are identical to those required under the federal Medicaid program. The only change is prescription paper in Washington must include the state Board of Pharmacy seal.

Prescribers won’t be able to use existing inventories of prescription paper after July 1. Any prescriber that doesn’t have approved paper on hand will have to send prescriptions electronically or by fax to a pharmacy.