

[print](#)

## **Mental health officials note psychotropic medications affected by Medicaid cuts**

---

08.08.13 - 12:16 pm

From staff reports

Alabama Medicaid filed a new rule on June 20, 2013 establishing prescription limits for its pharmacy program. ADMH staff met with Kelli Littlejohn, Dr. Robert Moon and other Alabama staff on July 3, several days after the rule's publication, in order to obtain more information about the rule and to begin a dialogue about implications of the proposed changes for individuals with developmental disorders, serious mental illnesses, and substances use disorders who currently depend on Medicaid for vital medical and psychiatric medications.

“It is important to understand that, relatively speaking, that psychotropic medications are significantly more expensive than most other types of medications,” said Timothy E. Stone, M.D., medical director, Alabama Department of Mental Health. “Because of the differential in cost between psychotropic medications and other classes of drugs, psychotropic medications will be a focus of cost cutting measures in any broad-based plan involving Medicaid prescription limits.”

Important points to remember:

-1. No psychotropic medications are currently included on the maintenance medication list.

-2. While brand name antipsychotic medications are excluded from prescription limits, generic antipsychotic medications (older atypical and all antipsychotic medications) are not excluded from prescription limits and are not currently on the maintenance medication list. From a practical standpoint, the new rule encourages prescribers to preferentially choose brand name antipsychotics over older (generic) atypical antipsychotics and all typical antipsychotics. In some circumstances, this may be of definite benefit (for example, for individuals who are treatment non-adherent and who respond to a newer, long-acting atypical antipsychotic). In other circumstances, it may result in a patient who is stable on a typical antipsychotic or depot medication being switched to a potentially less effective atypical antipsychotic.

-3. Anti-epileptic drugs, medications that are vital to the health of many individuals with developmental disorders due to the high incidence of seizures in that population, and some of which are indicated for the treatment of bipolar disorder, are not excluded from prescription limits. None of this class of medications is on the maintenance drug list. Lithium, the mainstay treatment of bipolar disorder is neither excluded or on the maintenance drug list. Finally, it is unclear how these changes will affect drugs or that may be utilized for substance use disorders.

The new rule regarding prescription drug limits is up for public comment and Medicaid has indicated that it will take all comments into serious consideration.

While the official deadline for comment was Aug. 2, it is imperative, Dr. Stone said, that the key concerns of mental health consumers and providers be presented to Medicaid as soon as possible to allow effective modification of the order prior to implementation Oct. 1, 2013.

They may call Dr. Stone at Alabama Department of Mental Health at 334-467-7478 or Dr. Robert Moon, commissioner of Alabama Medicaid at 334-242-5007.

---

© [cherokeeherald.com](http://cherokeeherald.com) 2013