The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Health and Human Services
Department of Public Health
250 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02108-4619

CHARLES D. BAKER
Governor

KARYN E. POLITO
Lieutenant Governor

MARYLOU SUDDERS
Secretary

MONICA BHAREL, MD, MPH
Commissioner

Tel: 617-624-6000
www.mass.gov/dph

ORDER OF THE COMMISSIONER OF PUBLIC HEALTH

FOLLOW UP PROCEDURES FOR ORAL PRESCRIPTIONS

On March 10, 2020, Governor Charles D. Baker declared a State of Emergency in the Commonwealth to respond to the spread of COVID-19. On March 11, 2020, in view of the grave threat that the spread of COVID-19 presents to the public health, the Public Health Council authorized and directed me to act pursuant to M.G.L. c. 17, §2A and to take all appropriate actions, incur such liabilities, and establish such rules, requirements, and procedures necessary to prepare for, respond to, and mitigate the spread of COVID-19 in order to protect the health and welfare of the people of the Commonwealth.

As of April 3, 2020, 10,402 cases of COVID-19 were reported by the Department of Public Health. The escalating COVID-19 public health emergency has begun and will continue to produce an extraordinary demand on the Commonwealth's healthcare system.

Easing certain requirements regarding the issuance of oral prescriptions will provide greater access to needed prescriptions for patients during the state of emergency; support the work of both prescribers and pharmacy staff by allowing them to prioritize their time toward service of patients; and support the Commonwealth's social distancing guidelines.

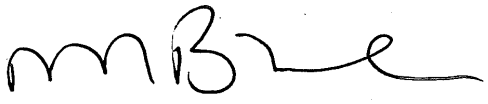
Accordingly, having received that authorization from the Council, and with the approval of the Governor, I issue the following Order:

In order to provide needed access for patients to controlled substances prescribed through oral prescriptions, for the duration of the state of emergency the time within which oral prescriptions must be reduced to writing, as set out in G.L. c. 94C, §§ 18(c) and 20(c), is hereby extended from seven days to 15 business days.

All applicable statute, regulations and guidance not inconsistent with this Order remain in effect.

This Order shall be effective immediately and shall remain in effect until the State of Emergency is terminated by the Governor, or until rescinded by me, whichever shall happen first.

IT IS SO ORDERED.



Monica Bharel, MD, MPH
Commissioner, Massachusetts Department of Public Health

April 6, 2020