

Drug Plan and Extended Benefits Branch (DPEB): Designated Antiretroviral (ARV) Prescriber Status

Information for Healthcare Professionals in Saskatchewan

PRESCRIBING ARVs IN SASKATCHEWAN

What are antiretrovirals (ARVs)?

- ARVs (antiretrovirals) are medications used to manage human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).
- They are used in combination as antiretroviral therapy (ART) for HIV treatment and for HIV prevention as Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) or Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP).

In addition to infectious diseases specialists, who can prescribe ARVs in Saskatchewan?

- In Saskatchewan, ARVs can be prescribed by licensed healthcare professionals who have the authority to prescribe medications.
- This includes: 1) medical doctors, including family physicians and specialists, 2) nurse practitioners, and 3) pharmacists who have collaborative prescribing agreements (or under prescriptive authority).

DESIGNATED ARV PRESCRIBER STATUS

What is the benefit of being recognized as a Designated ARV Prescriber by DPEB?

- Being recognized as a Designated ARV Prescriber facilitates more timely access to Exception Drug Status (EDS) coverage for patients that require ARV therapy.
- All Designated Prescriber's prescriptions for listed ARV medications (for beneficiaries who meet the published EDS criteria) will be adjudicated automatically at the dispensing pharmacy.
- The sole purpose is to facilitate the adjudication of claims to the Saskatchewan Drug Plan and reduce time to access ARV treatment. The purpose is not to confirm scope of practice or inform any type of monitoring.

If a patient is covered under Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB), does the writer of the ARV prescription need to be an DPEB Designated ARV Prescriber?

- No, NIHB does not require the ARV prescriber to be a DPEB Designated ARV Prescriber for claim submission.
- For questions about NIHB ARV drug cost coverage, call NIHB at 1-800-580-0950 or go to: <https://nihb-ssna.express-scripts.ca/en/0205140506092019/16/160407>

Does a healthcare provider need to complete HIV medical education or training to become recognized as a Designated ARV Prescriber with DPEB?

- While it is beneficial to receive HIV medical education on how to prescribe ARVs and HIV treatment, it is not a requirement to become recognized as a Designated ARV Prescriber with DPEB. There is no designated course or educational curriculum that needs to be completed for DPEB to approve a prescriber to become a Designated ARV Prescriber.
- However, it is strongly recommended that new ARV prescribers, especially those who plan on prescribing ART to people living with HIV, complete some form of HIV and ARV education.



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DESIGNATED ARV PRESCRIBER STATUS

What is the STBBI Treatment Education Program for Saskatchewan (STEPS), and how can it support healthcare professionals who are interested in learning how to prescribe ARVs or becoming a Designated ARV Prescriber?

- STEPS is administered by the University of Saskatchewan, through the College of Medicine's Division of Continuing Medical Education.
- STEPS offers free medical education opportunities to support ARV prescribers and healthcare professionals who provide care to people living with HIV. This includes accredited live webinars, access to recorded presentations, and coordination of 1-day HIV Clinical Preceptorship opportunities.
- For more information, go to www.steps-sk.ca or contact STEPS@usask.ca.

How does a healthcare professional request to become recognized by DPEB as a Designated ARV Prescriber for Saskatchewan?

- **Option #1:** The healthcare professional sends an e-mail to DPEB and requests to become recognized as a Designated ARV Prescriber.
 - Requirements: The email must include a licensed Saskatchewan infectious diseases specialist to indicate the new prescriber is connected to an experienced ARV prescriber.
 - Contact the Drug Plan and Extended Benefits Branch at 306-787-8744, 1-800-667-7581, or DPEB@health.gov.sk.ca for more information or to request enrollment.
- **Option #2 (recommended):** The healthcare professional sends an e-mail to the STEPS program and requests to become recognized as a Designated ARV Prescriber.
 - STEPS coordinates the requirements (detailed in Option #1) and sends an e-mail to DPEB on behalf of the requesting new prescriber.
 - Go to: [How to Become Recognized as a Designated ARV and/or DAA Prescriber for Saskatchewan - Continuing Medical Education | University of Saskatchewan](#) for more information or to request enrollment.

Is the list of Designated ARV Prescribers recognized by DPEB publicly available?

- No, this list is an internal document maintained by DPEB. It is not posted online or shared with external stakeholders.
- Healthcare professionals who are added to this list may be informed of upcoming HIV and other related educational opportunities offered by STEPS.

ARV DRUG COST COVERAGE FOR PATIENTS COVERED UNDER DPEB

Who is eligible for 100% drug coverage of ARVs through (DPEB)?

- An eligible patient must be a beneficiary under the Drug Plan and Extended Benefits Branch (DPEBB). A beneficiary is a Saskatchewan resident with an active Health Services Number who is not covered under Workers Compensation, Saskatchewan General Insurance (SGI), Non-Insured Health Benefits (NIHB), Veterans Affairs, or the Canadian Armed Forces.
- ARVs are covered 100% through DPEB. There is no co-payment and there should be no charge for the patient.
- If an eligible patient is billed for their ARVs, please contact DPEB or the dispensing pharmacy to troubleshoot.



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ARV DRUG COST COVERAGE FOR PATIENTS COVERED UNDER DPEB

Where do I find the Exception Drug Status (EDS) criteria for ARVs?

- The Exception Drug Status (EDS) criteria, as listed in Appendix A can be found on the Saskatchewan Formulary website at: <https://formulary.drugplan.ehealthsask.ca/PDFs/APPENDIXA.pdf>

What do I do if my patient does not meet EDS criteria for an ARV medication?

- If a patient does not meet the listed EDS criteria, a Drug Coverage Appeal Request can be submitted to the Drug Plan to review. The application form can be found here: <https://formulary.drugplan.ehealthsask.ca/PDFs/Drug%20Coverage%20Appeal%20Form.pdf>

When is Designated ARV Prescriber status required to ensure claims are automatically adjudicated at the pharmacy?

	Patient Covered Under DPEB	Patient Covered Under NIHB*
HIV Treatment		
New or changed ART Prescription	Yes	No
Refilling an ART prescription, including those written by another Designated ARV Prescriber	No	No
HIV Prevention		
Pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP) Tenofovir disoproxil fumarate/emtricitabine (generic form of Truvada)	No	No
Some medications used for post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP) Dolutegravir (Tivicay) and tenofovir disoproxil fumarate/emtricitabine (generic form of Truvada)	No	No

*NIHB = Non-Insured Health Benefits for First Nations and Inuit patients

