



[Workers' Comp](#)

# North Carolina Utilization Rules for Opioid and Other Pharmacological Pain Management Treatment

June 19, 2018  
2 MIN READ

## When do the new rules apply?

The rules apply to all affected treatments in all affected claims on or after **May 1, 2018**.

**Affected claims:** Any NC claim unless the patient has been receiving a “*targeted controlled substance*” for **more than 12 consecutive weeks immediately prior to 5/1/18**.

**Affected treatment:** Pain management treatment for non-cancer pain in WC claims.

**Exception:** medications administered in a health care setting.

## What’s in the new rules?

### Controlled Substance Reporting System (CSRS) mandate – Effective Nov. 1, 2018

- Requires prescribers to check CSRS at certain points in treatment.

### Clinical guidelines and preauthorization requirements – Effective May 1, 2018

- Different guidelines for:
  - 1st prescription in “*acute phase*”
  - Subsequent prescriptions in “*acute phase*”
  - Prescriptions in “*chronic phase*”
- Requirement to “consider” prescribing an opioid antagonist in certain scenarios.
- Suggestions to “consider” non-pharmacological treatment and tapering/discontinuation.
- Preauthorization requirements for certain medications prescribed in a “*chronic phase*”

“**Companion Guide**” — Provides guidance as to how the Commission expects the rules to be implemented

**New Ex Parte Communication Forms** – released with the “Companion Guide”

## Important Terminology

**“Acute Phase”** – Treatment within 12 weeks of:

- a compensable injury,
  - an aggravation of a compensable injury, or
  - a surgery for a compensable injury
- (Note that there can be multiple “*acute phases*” in the same claim.)

**“Chronic Phase”** – Treatment more than 12 weeks from the beginning of the last “*acute phase*.”

## Transition to Compliance with the Rules

- No “legacy claims” or “legacy period.” (Claims that aren’t affected by the rules will never be affected by the rules).
- For affected claims, Companion Guide recommends a transition period of up to 6 months.

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