Electronic Prescribing of Controlled Substance (EPCS)
**Click for Control**
*2019 Arizona Campaign*

## Frequently Asked Questions

**Q:** Is electronic prescribing of controlled substance (EPCS) legal in Arizona?

**A:** Yes. In 2010 the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) issued regulations permitting prescribers to enter and send prescriptions electronically to pharmacies and enables pharmacies to receive, dispense and archive electronic prescriptions. Then in April 2012, Arizona's governor signed into law legislation making e-prescribing of controlled substances (EPCS) legal in Arizona.

**Q:** How do I get started with EPCS?

**A:** You will need specialized software and a two-factor authentication device or process. Providers should follow these steps to get started:
1. Contact your EHR vendor and ask if they are certified to support EPCS (or see next question about how to look up this information online)
2. Complete identity proofing requirements
3. Obtain dual (two-factor) authentication device or process
4. Set up security access controls
5. Adhere to digital signature and audit requirements

**Q:** How do I know if my EHR software has the EPCS functionality?

**A:** Contact your vendor or you can look up the information online at: www.surescripts.com/network-connections/mns/prescriber-software.

**Q:** Is EPCS costly to implement?

**A:** The cost to implement and utilize EPCS varies by vendor and your contractual arrangement.

**Q:** Who do I contact if I am having technical issues with setting up EPCS in my office?

**A:** Contact your vendor for technical support.

**Q:** Do all pharmacies accept electronically prescribed controlled substances?

**A:** Currently more than 94.5% of the pharmacies in Arizona are EPCS enabled.

**Q:** Are there real benefits to EPCS, especially if I prescribe controlled substances occasionally?
**A:** There are many reasons to use EPCS even if done just occasionally:

- It is a **safer method** than handing a paper prescription directly to the patient

- At the pharmacy, it is generally assumed when an e-prescription is received that the patient is on their way, so the **prescription is expedited**

- Improves patient safety by **automatically** saving the new e-prescription in the patient's drug file versus flipping through a paper chart to find the medication list

- Helps to **reduce transcription errors**

- Electronic health record (EHR) systems have **clinical drug alerts** – these can be managed in the EHR to reflect your practice needs

- Prescription **errors can be reduced by 50%** or more by using clinical drug alerts

- The future of prescription delivery is e-prescribing: Minnesota, Maine, and New York now require prescriptions to be delivered electronically

**Q:** When I am set-up for EPCS, do I also need to give a paper copy of the prescription to the patient?
**A:** No. To assist your patients, it is suggested that you speak with your nearby pharmacy managers to ensure they stock adequate supplies of medications you commonly prescribe. This will cut down on instances where prescriptions are sent to pharmacies that cannot fulfill the prescriptions.

**Q:** Is EPCS safe and secure?
**A:** Yes, if certified systems are utilized. Certified vendor software and pharmacy software is audited by a DEA Certified Information System Auditor, such as WebTrust, SysTrust, or SAS 70. Additionally, e-prescriptions are much more secure than paper prescriptions which can be tampered with, lost or stolen.

**Available Resources**

Health Current can help with e-prescribing by answering questions and assisting you overcome any barriers you may encounter. Email erx@healthcurrent.org or call us at (602) 688.7200.

Additional resources and reference information are also available at www.healthcurrent.org/information-center/e-prescribing/.