



# PHYSICIAN ORDERS AND MEDICATIONS

Wisconsin Department of Health Services / Division of Quality Assurance  
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## ISSUE

What constitutes a written physician order?

## DISCUSSION

In assisted living facilities and adult day care settings, regulations or standards may indicate that a written order is required from a physician before staff can administer medications.

There have been questions regarding what constitutes a written physician order. There have also been barriers to obtaining a written physician order, which can cause harm to residents. For example, a resident comes back from a physician visit on a Friday afternoon with new medications. However, the facility does not have orders and are unable to reach the physician to obtain them until the following Monday. Another scenario involves a facility receiving printed orders from an electronic health record and the medication orders do not contain a written physician signature.

This publication provides technical assistance related to what survey staff looks for in regards to a written physician order.

## ANALYSIS

### **Adult Day Care (ADC)**

Standard I.F. (3)(a)

A written order from the prescribing practitioner must be in the record.

### **Adult Family Homes (AFH)**

Wis. Admin. Code § DHS 88.07(3)(d)

Before a licensee or service provider dispenses or administers a prescription medication to a resident, the licensee shall obtain a written order from the physician who prescribed the medication specifying who, by name or position, is permitted to administer the medication, under what circumstances, and in what dosage the medication is to be administered.

### **Residential Care Apartment Complex (RCAC)**

There are no regulations that specifically address physician orders for medications.

### **Community Based Residential Facilities (CBRF)**

Wis. Admin. Code § DHS 83.37(1)(a) Medications. (1) General requirements. (a) Practitioner's order.

There shall be a written practitioner's order in the resident's record for any prescription medication, over-the-counter medication, or dietary supplements administered to a resident.

## RESULT

A written practitioner order for specific medications can include the following:

1. A written order from the practitioner that is faxed, mailed, or hand-delivered
2. A MAR signed by the practitioner that is faxed, mailed, or hand-delivered
3. A copy of a prescription from the pharmacist that is faxed, mailed, or hand-delivered (Pharmacists have specific regulations that pertain to the provision of a copy of a prescription to a patient.)

4. A MAR signed by the pharmacist, based on prescription orders signed by the physician that the pharmacist has on file
5. An electronic order that is directly transmitted electronically to the facilities electronic health record (computer-to-computer transmission)
6. A printed copy of the electronic order contained in the practitioner’s electronic health record that indicates the practitioner electronically signed the order (This printed copy is provided directly to the facility from the provider.)
7. A printed copy of the electronic order from the pharmacy with evidence of signature

The facility shall obtain one of the order types noted above within two business days. While waiting for an order of types 1-7 above, a facility can follow the instructions on the prescription label. This should happen only in situations where the pharmacy or physicians are unavailable to provide the written order.

**Note:** MARs, printed electronic orders, and discharge summaries provided by the practitioner to the assisted living provider may not always be compliant for pharmacy prescription laws. For these reasons, pharmacists will need to contact the practitioner to obtain legal orders. When contact is made between the pharmacist and the practitioner, orders may --- in some cases ---be changed to avoid delays in the availability of medication. Assisted living facilities and pharmacists will need to communicate these changes and delays so that the facility has the current orders and the direction to delay administration of the medication until available.

	<b>CBRF</b>	<b>AFH</b>	<b>RCAC</b>	<b>ADC</b>
<b>Written order indicating which staff can administer.</b>	Silent	Yes	Silent	No facility policy is required.
<b>Written order for each medication when administered by staff</b>	Yes	Yes	Yes All prescription drugs require a physician order at a pharmacy.	Yes
<b>Written order for each medication when resident self-administers</b>	Yes	No All prescription drugs require a physician order at a pharmacy.	No All prescription drugs require a physician order at a pharmacy.	No All prescription drugs require a physician order at a pharmacy.