



SAMPLE MEDICATIONS

Wisconsin Department of Health Services / Division of Quality Assurance
P-01909 (04/2022)

ISSUE

Can residents in assisted living facilities use sample medications?

BACKGROUND

Sample medications are those medications that manufacturers generally provide directly to physicians. These medication samples are primarily used as starter supplies when patients are started on a new medication. More often, however, physicians use these sample medications for patients who have difficulties affording medications. In some cases, the sample medications are used beyond that of a starter supply and for ongoing needs.

Medication samples are not typically packaged and labeled by pharmacies. State law does exempt sample medications dispensed by physicians from the labeling requirements found in Wis. Stat. § 450.11. However, physicians must keep the sample medication in the original manufacture’s packaging. The challenge for assisted living programs is that the sample packaging may not meet the regulations or provide adequate information to safely administer these sample medications.

RESPONSE

Adult Day Care Center (ADCC) Participants who administer their own medications may use sample medications as directed by their physicians. However, adult day care center regulations require medications to remain in original packaging when day care staff administers medications [Wis. Admin. Code s [DHS 105.14\(7\)\(d\)3.c.](#)]. Therefore, ADCC staff who administers medications to participants needs to ensure that the sample medications remain in the sample packaging received from the physicians. Since labeling and information may be somewhat lacking when sample products are used, ADCC staff may need to make specific requests to obtain written information about the medication and may need to consult with the physicians about the use of the sample drug [Wis. Admin. Code s [DHS 105.14\(7\)\(d\)3.d.](#)].

Adult Family Home (AFH) Residents who administer and control their own medications can use sample medications as directed by their physicians. If AFH staff is administering sample medications, the medications must be sent to the facility in the original sample packaging from the physicians.

Community-Based Residential Facility (CBRF) Residents who administer and control their own medications can use sample medications as directed by their physicians. If CBRF staff is administering sample medications, the medications must be sent to the facility in the original sample packaging provided by the physicians. If the CBRF does not have a nurse on staff, then the sample medications must be in unit dose or unit time packaging from the physician or pharmacist. Pharmacists, at their discretion, may repackage sample medications that have been dispensed from a physician to meet the CBRF’s unit dose packaging requirements.

Residential Care Apartment Complex (RCAC) Residents who administer and control their own medications may use sample medications as directed by their physicians. When the RCAC is responsible for medication management, it is recommended that the registered nurse responsible for medication management work with a pharmacist to set up some guidelines for the use of these samples. Guidelines usually include maintaining samples in original packaging and obtaining written instructions from the physician.

The following chart summarizes the use of sample medications.

	ADCC	AFH	CBRF		RCAC
			Supervised	Not Supervised	
Residents, tenants, participants self-administer; samples can be used and packaged as desired.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Facility staff administer; sample medications can be used.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Sample medication set up when staff administer; DQA Memo 12-007 applies.	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes*	Yes

*Unit dose packaging by a pharmacist is required unless physician-dispensed sample is already in unit dose packaging.