

What is e-Prescribing?

In simple terms, it is the completion and transmission of a prescription through secure electronic means to a patient's pharmacy. This does not mean by email, fax or phone.

By what date must I comply?

March 27, 2016. But you should definitely start the enrollment process as soon as possible as it will take time to install and arrange security. Once your software is installed, you should start using it so that you are familiar with it long before the deadline.

Are there waivers available?

The law allows the Commissioner of the NYS DOH to grant waivers of up to one year only in very certain circumstances. They have said that they will be very hard to come by. See below from the DOH's website.

The Prescription Drug Reform act- Chapter 447 of the laws of 2012 and Title 10 Part 80 of the Official Compilation of Codes, Rules and Regulations of the State of New York (§80.64(c)(3)) allows the Commissioner of Health to grant a practitioner a waiver, not to exceed a time period of one year, from the requirement to electronically prescribe. Waivers may be granted based upon a showing of economic hardship, technological limitations that are not reasonably within the control of the practitioner, or other exceptional circumstance demonstrated by the practitioner.

How do I go about selecting and enrolling in an eRx system?

The first question you must ask is: "Do I have a practice management system?" If you do have a PMS, then our recommendation is that you contact your PMS company and ask them about their e-prescribe solution.

If you don't have a PMS, are not computerized or you don't like the answers provided by your PMS, you might want to consider a standalone eRx program or the NYSDA endorsed solution.

Functionality of all of the eRx systems is basically the same. But as with other computer software, the interface is slightly different. Some are easier to navigate than others. The advantage of using your own PMS is that there might be a bridge between your software and the ePrescribing software. A bridge is a function that automatically brings over the patient information into the ePrescribing section of the software. So, things like the patient's name, address, phone number are all automatically transferred. And conversely, the prescription that was transmitted is then automatically entered into the patient's history within the PMS.

The main disadvantage to the standalone systems is that you will have to enter the patients name, address, DOB and phone number when you transmit their first prescription. After that, the patient is stored in the system. But, for the first one, you have to manually enter the information, like you do on a paper script. It takes very little time.

Use the following screening questions to determine which software platform is right for you. Contact the one you like and sign up. It is usually easy to start the enrollment process. Contact the vendor either online or by phone and start the process. You cannot start early enough.

Questions to ask an eRx vendor

- How much does your software cost?
 - Set-up and monthly per doctor
- Is there a long-term commitment?
- Is it EPCS capable?
- Can it convert my patients' demographics?
 - Only needed for standalone
- How long does it take to enroll?
 - Is there a backlog of subscribers?
 - How long should I expect to be on the phone to sign up?
- What support is available?
 - During set-up and after
 - Is support Online and/or phone
 - Is there a cost for support?
- Is the software available as a mobile phone or tablet app?

Signing up for Controlled Substance Prescribing

Once have decided on a software solution for ePrescribing, the second step is to decide whether you are going to e-prescribe controlled substances. You have probably already made this decision.

If you do want to e-prescribe controlled substances, there are certain steps that you must follow to satisfy the added levels of security necessary.

First, you must go through an identity proofing process. Essentially, you must satisfy that you are who you say you are and that you are allowed to prescribe them. Once you satisfy this process, you can start e-prescribing controlled substances. The identity proofing is usually done by a 3rd party arranged through your software vendor. They will walk you through the process once you have signed up with them and informed them that you wish to prescribe controlled substances. Once you have completed the identity proofing process, your software vendor may provide you with a device that adds an additional layer of security to the e-prescribing process. When e-prescribing controlled substances, you will need to satisfy what is called a two factor authentication. In other words, you will need your regular username and password as well as some other authentication. This could be a one-time password device that generates a time sensitive password or maybe even a fingerprint scan. Each software will be different on how it attains the two factor authentication. Most software actually texts the time sensitive password to your mobile phone when it knows I need a password.

If you choose to prescribe controlled substances, there are other matters that must also be considered. The eRx software must meet some strict state and federal requirements. It therefore must have gone through third party audit. The NYS DOH wants to make sure that those using EPCS have vetted software that meets certain minimum standards for safety and privacy. You are responsible for registering your copy of the software with the NYS BNE. All you have to do is provide the BNE with the information your software vendor will provide that proves they have passed the proper DEA/DOH/BNE audit. They will provide this to you; you keep it on file and just report it to the NYS DOH. You must register your software online on the NYS Health

Commerce website. This is the same website from which you used to get your prescription blanks. According to the DOH, registration is necessary every two years or at any time your software vendor changes the version of their software.

1. Use the following steps to register your EPCS software:
2. Login to the Health Commerce System (HCS) at <https://commerce.health.state.ny.us>
3. Under “My Content” click on “All Applications”
4. Click on “R”
5. Scroll down to ROPES and double click to open the application. You may also click on the “+” sign to add the application “ROPES” under “My Applications” on the left side of the screen.
6. Continue to fill in all of the necessary information as prompted by the menus on the website.

Is it permissible for a staff member to maintain custody of the practitioner’s hard token or 2nd level security device?

No. The practitioner is not allowed to have any other person use the token or enter the knowledge factor (password) to sign prescriptions for controlled substances. Failure by the practitioner to secure the hard token or password may provide a basis for revocation or suspension of the practitioner’s DEA registration.

Is it permissible for a staff member to generate and send the e-prescription?

Sending the prescription finally (this is true for all categories of drugs) is legally the same as signing a paper prescription. You could never authorize a non-dentist staff person to sign a paper prescription and you, therefore, cannot authorize a non-dentist staff person to finally send the prescription electronically. The non-dentist staff person (again true for all categories of drugs) can enter all the information for you short of that final step when you actually electronically sign and transmit the prescription.

Are there any system requirements?

For most software, if the device can access the Internet, it can generate e-prescriptions. The program is not dependent on a specific operating system at all. However, most integrated solutions require that you have the latest version of the practice management software installed. This may require an upgrade for some users.

Is it safe to e-prescribe over a public Wi-Fi network?

The best answer is that you should only use public Wi-Fi if you can secure it. Hypertext Transfer Protocol Secure (HTTPS) is a communications protocol for secure communication. It provides for authentication of the website, bidirectional encryption of communication and protects against eavesdropping and tampering. In reality, this is exactly the protocol you would use in a public WiFi. HIPAA regulations require reasonable measures, not extraordinary measures, for protection.

Do I still have to query the I-STOP PMP when I prescribe a controlled substance?

Unfortunately, the answer is YES. As of right now, there is no eRx solution that can query the state's PMP database directly. This is a function of the DOH not being ready. We are told they are working on it.

Software	EPCS Capable?	Cost (monthly/set-up)	Add'l cost for ePCS	Integrated (I) or Standalone(S)?	NYSDA Endorsed?	Limited Support
Schein e-Prescribe Standalone	Y	\$20/\$50	\$5	S	Y	N
Schein e-Prescribe Integrated	Y	\$22/\$50	\$5	S	Y	N
Allscripts Basic	N	\$0/\$0		S	N	Y

What if there are multiple dentists in the practice?

- Each doctor must have their own subscription
- And their own security device (hard token)

What if I work in multiple offices?

- Consider standalone since most standalones can be used anywhere
- Integrated solution may require separate license for each location
- Consider an enterprise(multi-license) or cloud based solution

Helpful Websites and Phone #s

- NYS Bureau of Narcotic Enforcement
 - email: narcotic@health.ny.gov
 - 866-811-7957
- NYS DOH information website:
 - www.health.ny.gov/professionals/narcotic/electronic_prescribing/
- Federal DEA information website:
 - www.deadiversion.usdoj.gov/ecomm/e_rx/

A comprehensive list of software vendors may be found at www.surescripts.com.

Contact Info for several vendors:

Schein e-Prescribe www.hseprescribe.com
Allscripts www.eprescribe.allscripts.com
Practice Fusion www.practicefusion.com
DoseSpot www.dosespot.com
iPrescribe Available for iOS on the App Store
Eaglesoft www.patterson.eaglesoft.net