



U.S. Department of Justice
Federal Bureau of Prisons

Washington, D.C. 20534

April 13, 2020

**MEMORANDUM FOR INSTITUTION CHIEF PHARMACISTS
INSTITUTION CLINICAL DIRECTORS
INSTITUTION HEALTH SERVICES ADMINISTRATORS
CHIEF, CENTRAL PROCESSING PHARMACY SERVICES**

ALBERT JOHNSTON Digitally signed by ALBERT JOHNSTON
Date: 2020.04.13 13:11:07 -04'00'

FROM: CAPT A. Martin Johnston, R.Ph., CCHP
BOP Chief Pharmacist
Health Services Division

SUBJECT: Over-The-Counter Medications Guidance

Because of the ongoing response to the COVID-19 emergency, several institutions have temporarily closed commissary or imposed other restrictions that limit access to commissary. Such measures make routine access of OTC medications in accordance with 6541.02 Over-the-Counter Medications difficult if not impossible. The intent of the OTC program statement is to ensure inmates have access to OTC medications. The normal expectation is non-indigent inmates are required to purchase OTC medications that are indicated for cosmetic and general hygiene issues or symptoms of minor medical ailments from the commissary. Maintaining such an expectation in the current response to the COVID-19 emergency may not be possible. While prior guidance does not make exceptions for routine closures of the commissary, changes to commissary operations in response to this emergency are far from routine.

Commissary access is key to the application of current OTC restrictions present in the BOP National Formulary. Current formulary restrictions delineate instances where inmates should ultimately obtain OTC items from the commissary rather than through the pharmacy and vice versa. Given the unexpected (and prolonged) closures of some institutional commissaries, local application of these formulary restrictions require temporary modification with the goal of maintaining access to medically necessary medications, regardless of indigent status.

As such, for the duration of the response to the COVID-19 emergency, institutions that have implemented measures that

restrict access to commissary may need to modify normal practices to ensure all inmates have access to medically necessary OTC medications. Return to previous procedures in accordance with the BOP National Formulary and OTC Prescribing Matrix is expected at the earliest opportunity to meet the objectives of the OTC program statement.

Please contact your Regional Chief Pharmacist or myself for questions or additional information.

cc: RADM Chris A. Bina, SDAD, HSD
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