

# Buprenorphine Dispensed in Vermont – Data Brief

## The Vermont Prescription Monitoring System

### Background

Buprenorphine is a prescription drug used to treat opioid addiction. It is typically prescribed in small daily doses that decrease in size over time, allowing a patient to stabilize. This report includes data for buprenorphine prescribed to treat addiction that was dispensed from Vermont-licensed pharmacies<sup>1</sup>. Data for buprenorphine dispensed directly from addiction clinics (such as the Care Alliance for Opioid Addiction treatment centers) is not included here due to Federal confidentiality regulations that exempt clinics from uploading data to prescription monitoring programs.

### Buprenorphine Recipients & Buprenorphine Prescriptions

Across the past four years, there were approximately 5,000 unique *recipients* of at least one buprenorphine prescription each year. However, over the same four year period, there were only 10,422 total unique *recipients*, indicating that many individuals receive at least one prescription in multiple years. The number of buprenorphine *prescriptions* dispensed has increased steadily across the last four years.

*Buprenorphine dispensed in Vermont by year*

	Year			
	2010	2011	2012	2013
Recipient Total	5,166	4,711	4,726	5,081
Prescription Total	79,602	92,729	97,959	104,318
Days' Supply	952,037	998,739	1,065,329	1,135,236

### Conclusion

The last four years have seen an annual increase in prescriptions for buprenorphine dispensed from Vermont-licensed pharmacies. However, as we see in the number of unique buprenorphine recipients per year, this increase in prescriptions is not indicative of buprenorphine being prescribed to a growing number of Vermonters. A likely explanation for the increase in prescriptions and days' supply is that Vermont clinicians are adhering to the recent best practice guidelines for opioid addiction treatment<sup>2</sup>. These guidelines instruct that new patients be seen frequently and that they are prescribed a limited number of days' supply of buprenorphine at any single office visit. Once patients have been compliant with treatment for a sufficient period of time, they enter the maintenance stage of treatment and are seen less frequently and prescribed up to a 30 day supply of buprenorphine. This being the case, changes in annual prescription totals and days' supply are not necessarily indicative of an increase in the quantity of buprenorphine being dispensed in Vermont.

More information about buprenorphine is available from the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Service Administration](#).

<sup>1</sup> The data presented in this brief excludes prescriptions for buprenorphine patches that are used to treat pain but are not prescribed for substance abuse treatment.

<sup>2</sup> Vermont Department of Health, Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse Programs (VDH/ADAP) and the Office of Vermont Health Access (OVHA), 2010. Vermont buprenorphine practice guidelines.

For more information, contact David Horton ([david.horton@vermont.state.us](mailto:david.horton@vermont.state.us)).