

COMMITTEE ON HEALTH, HOSPITALS AND
HUMAN SERVICES

05/08/2025-REPORTED OUT TO THE FLOOR

04/22/2025-REPORTED OUT TO THE COMMITTEE ON RULES AND JUDICIARY

BILL NO. 36-0021

Thirty-Sixth Legislature of the Virgin Islands

February 27, 2025

An Act amending title 19 Virgin Islands Code, part III, chapter 29, subchapter I relating to opioids and requiring that a practitioner discuss certain information with a patient when prescribing opioids

PROPOSED BY: Senator Marvin A. Blyden

Co-sponsors: Ray Fonseca, Kurt A. Violet and Avery L. Lewis

Be it enacted by the Legislature of the Virgin Islands:

SECTION 1. Title 19 of the Virgin Islands Code, part III, chapter 29, subchapter I, is amended by adding section 603a as follows:

“§603a. Patient Opioid Notification

(a) Prior to issuing the initial prescription of a Schedule II controlled substance or any other opioid pain reliever that is a prescription drug in a course of treatment for acute or chronic pain and again prior to issuing the third prescription in a course of treatment, a practitioner shall discuss with the patient, or the patient's parent or guardian if the patient is under 18 years of age and is not an emancipated minor, the following information about the drugs being prescribed:

(1) the reasons why the prescription is necessary;

(2) alternative treatments that may be available; and

(3) the risks associated with the use of the drugs being prescribed, specifically that opioids are highly addictive, even when taken as prescribed; that there is a risk of developing a physical or psychological dependence on the controlled substance; and that taking more opioids than prescribed, or mixing alcohol, benzodiazepines and other central nervous system depressants, can result in fatal respiratory depression.

(b) The practitioner shall include a note in the patient's medical record that the practitioner has discussed with the patient or the patient's parent or guardian, as applicable, the risks of developing a physical or psychological dependence on the controlled substance and alternative treatments that may be available.

(c) Subsection (a) does not apply to a prescription for a patient who is currently in active treatment for cancer, receiving hospice care from a licensed hospice or palliative care, is a resident of a long-term care facility, or is in the treatment of substance abuse or opioid dependence.”

BILL SUMMARY

This bill amends title 19 Virgin Islands Code, part III, chapter 29, subchapter I by requiring practitioners, when prescribing a Schedule II controlled substance or any other opioid pain reliever which is a prescription drug in the course of treatment for acute or chronic pain, to discuss the risks associated with the use of the drug. A practitioner is not required to discuss the risks associated with the use of these medications when prescribing to a patient in active treatment for cancer, receiving hospice care from a licensed hospice or palliative care, is a resident of a long-term care facility, or is in the treatment of substance abuse or opioid dependence.

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