



# County of San Diego

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September 21, 2023

## COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO PREHOSPITAL BUPRENORPHINE (SUBOXONE®) PILOT PROGRAM

We are pleased to announce the initiation of the County of San Diego Emergency Medical Services (CoSD EMS) prehospital Buprenorphine (Suboxone®) Pilot Program (Bup Program) as part of our overall strategy to reduce suffering and deaths from the opioid epidemic.<sup>1</sup> Effective October 2, 2023, the San Dieguito EMS District ambulance service provider will be the first participating agency.<sup>2</sup> As the pilot progresses, we anticipate phasing in additional EMS agency participation.

### Identification of Prehospital Buprenorphine Candidates

CoSD EMS Protocol [S-145 Opioid Withdrawal/Opioid Use Disorder](#) defines the requirements for patient participation in the Bup Program. Eligible patients must be in acute opioid withdrawal. This is determined by calculation of a [Clinical Opiate Withdrawal Scale \(COWS\) Score](#). Appropriate patients will receive Suboxone® and a warm hand-off to medication assisted treatment.

### Base Hospital Communication

During the first phase of the Bup Program Pilot, when a paramedic identifies an eligible patient, contact will be made with Highland Hospital, the designated alternate base station. Paramedics will be connected directly with a qualified physician for consultation on opioid withdrawal treatment. Highland is the only base hospital authorized to provide medical oversight for prehospital Suboxone® administration during this pilot. Paramedics shall contact their normal base hospital for all other medical direction, including determination of destination.

We are excited to initiate this novel prehospital Bup Program. Thank you for providing outstanding emergency care to our patients.

Sincerely,

Kristi L. Koenig, MD, FACEP, FIFEM, FAEMS, Medical Director  
San Diego County Emergency Medical Services Office  
San Diego County Fire

cc: Andrew Parr, EMS Administrator  
Jeff Collins, Director

<sup>1</sup> The CoSD EMS Agency Bup Program is authorized by the State of California EMS Authority as a local optional scope of practice (LOSOP). Suboxone® (buprenorphine-naloxone) is the approved medication for use in this LOSOP.

<sup>2</sup> The San Dieguito EMS District, also known as County Service Area 17, is served by American Medical Response.