# ABSOLUTE SCOOP

## HELPFUL HINTS

All electronic prescriptions include the patient's date of birth as a second identifier as well as a digital signature. These are important elements of any prescription document and a good practice to implement at your facility:

- Include DOB on any documentation sent to pharmacy regarding a resident's medication order.
- Ensure the prescriber reviews and signs all admission documentation.

These practices support communication amongst the healthcare team and continuity of care for our patients.

## UNDERSTANDING THE EPCS MANDATE EFFECTIVE JANUARY 2025: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

*Written by Brandi Clouston,  Integration and Program Director*

The Electronic Prescribing of Controlled Substances (EPCS) mandate will become effective January 2025. This new regulation aims to streamline prescription processes, enhance patient safety, and curb the misuse of controlled substances.

**What is EPCS?**

EPCS refers to the use of electronic systems to prescribe and transmit controlled substances securely. Unlike traditional paper prescriptions, EPCS provides a digital method to issue, transmit, and track prescriptions for medications classified as controlled substances.

The EPCS mandate requires that all prescriptions for controlled substances be transmitted electronically rather than on paper. This transition is designed to reduce prescription fraud, improve accuracy, and make the prescription process more efficient. The system also enhances tracking capabilities, allowing for better monitoring of prescription patterns and ensuring compliance with federal and state regulations.

**Who is Impacted?**

The EPCS mandate is comprehensive and affects various types of healthcare settings. Below are examples of different sectors that will be effected:

- Skilled Nursing Facilities (SNFs)
- Assisted Living Facilities (ALFs)
- Hospitals and Private Practices
- Pharmacies

**How to Become Compliant**

Becoming compliant with the EPCS mandate involves several steps, each crucial for ensuring that your facility meets the new requirements:

1. **Adopt EPCS-Compliant Software:** Ensure that your Electronic Health Record (EHR) or electronic prescribing system is certified to handle EPCS. This involves selecting a software vendor that supports EPCS capabilities and has achieved certification from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).
   - **PointClickCare and MatrixCare** both offer an EPCS solution. Please reach out to your account representative for more information.
   - **SureScripts** is another solution many prescribers utilize that Absolute Pharmacy is already within network.
     - Prescribers may need to update their DEA registration to include electronic prescribing capabilities.
2. **Implement Two-Factor Authentication**: EPCS requires the use of Two-Factor Authentication (2FA) to verify the identity of prescribers. This typically involves a combination of something the prescriber knows (such as a password) and something they have (such as a token or biometric verification). Ensure that your systems are equipped to handle 2FA.
3. **Train Staff**: All relevant staff members should be made aware of the EPCS mandate.

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4. **Update Policies and Procedures**: Revise your internal policies and procedures to reflect the new EPCS processes. This includes ensuring that all prescriptions for controlled substances are handled electronically and maintaining documentation to support compliance.

- Starting in January, many of Absolute Pharmacy's controlled prescription communications will be changing to reflect these new requirements.

5. **Conduct a Security Audit:** Perform a security audit to ensure that your systems are secure and meet the standards required for handling electronic prescriptions of controlled substances. This helps protect patient information and prevent unauthorized access.

The EPCS mandate represents a significant shift in how controlled substances are prescribed and managed. By adopting electronic prescribing systems, implementing robust security measures, and adhering to the specified time frames, healthcare providers can ensure compliance and contribute to a more efficient and secure prescription process.

Absolute will assist compliance with this new regulation by providing guidance and resources to our facilities and prescribers we work with to support patient care.

https://www.cms.gov/medicare/e-health/eprescribing/cms-eprescribing-for-controlled-substances-program

# Please contact your Consultant Pharmacist or Account Manager if you have any questions.

## About the Author

*Outside of work, you can find Brandi in the kitchen trying to cook or bake something new or you can find her on the couch, cuddling two pups while binge watching TV. She is really good at binge watching TV although she doesn't like to brag about it.*

Brandi Clouston is the Integration & Program Director at Absolute Pharmacy and has been a part of our team for over 22 years! She started her journey as a pharmacy tech, then navigated every aspect of our organization, gathering invaluable insights along the way. She has an incredible depth of knowledge in EMAR applications and her passion for problem-solving shines in every project she undertakes. Brandi is meticulous with details, documents everything, a very good listener, has a creative flair about her, and a good sense of humor. We are so lucky to have her! Brandi resides in Columbus, Ohio with her Husband and Dogs, Pancakes and Waffles.

**Why do cemeteries have fences?**
Because everyone's dying to get in.

**How do you fix a broken pumpkin?**
With a pumpkin patch!

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