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Principles: Pharmacy Benefits

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BACKGROUND:

DRC adopted these principles to guide our policy work and ensure that individuals with disabilities should have access to affordable, necessary drugs of their choice on a voluntary basis. Disability Rights California opposes forced medication and treatment of individuals with disabilities.

PRINCIPLES:

1. Necessary drugs of choice should be available.

- Drug formularies should be as broad and comprehensive as possible so that doctors can prescribe the widest choice of drugs consistent with the individual's needs and preference. Not all drugs work for all people; individuals may prefer to try different medications to find the one that works best for them.
- There must be reasonable procedures for obtaining drugs that are not on a particular drug formulary. When insurance companies do not cover certain drugs or medications, information should be made available to beneficiaries about drug programs that are free or low-cost.
- Publicly funded prescription drug programs should ensure that the labeling is fully accessible. For example, for individuals who are low vision it is critical to have labels in large print.

- The approval process should not be overly burdensome on beneficiaries or providers.
- Drug classifications that arbitrarily limit the number of classes of drugs, and the number of drugs per class should be avoided. For example, a formulary that establishes a classification for “antidepressants” but then further limits the available number of antidepressants to only two would be unacceptable.

2. Necessary drugs should be accessible.

- Any State-sponsored drug program should ensure that a sufficient number of pharmacies participate so that drugs are available at pharmacies near the beneficiary’s residence.
- Drug programs should ensure drugs are available by mail order, over the internet, and by home delivery.
- Comprehensive access to prescription drugs should be available for dually eligible beneficiaries in the Medi-Cal and Medicare Part D programs to meet medical needs.
- There should be a timely and meaningful dispute resolution for individuals, and continued coverage for all medically necessary medication during the dispute resolution process.
- The State should not leverage drug prices by imposing prior authorization under the Medi-Cal program on nonparticipating pharmacies.
- Drugs should be available regardless of medical condition or disability. This includes drugs for HIV/AIDS, psychiatric conditions, and severe pain.
- To the extent permitted under federal law, the State should provide the same drug benefit to individuals dually eligible for Medi-Cal and Medicare as is available to individuals who are beneficiaries of Medi-Cal only.

3. Necessary drugs should be affordable.

- The State should participate in purchasing arrangements to obtain drugs at the lowest possible cost consistent with availability, access, and non-discrimination.
- The State should ensure that individuals who need maintenance drugs, a number of drugs, or drugs for chronic conditions are able to obtain a reasonable supply at a reasonable cost.

- The State should ensure that insurance premiums, deductibles, coinsurance or co-payments are not unduly burdensome so that beneficiaries can afford the prescriptions they need.