

Monitoring Controlled Substances: Scripts for Having Difficult Conversations

Provided by: Noah Nesin, MD, FAAFP, Vice President of Medical Affairs at PCHC

Helpful Tips:

- When learning to discuss these issues with patients, select “easy” patients to practice with.
- Practice with one another to build confidence
 - * Best if you can use clinical staff (MA, LPN, RN etc.) not directly involved in patient care – this removes emotion

Patient

Provider/Practice Response

“I’m out of town. I can’t come in for my pill count.”

“No problem, just give me the name of the closest pharmacy and I will fax them a sheet to fill out once they count your pills.”

“I’m out of town, I can’t come in for my urine drug screen.”

“No problem, just give me the name of the closest hospital and I will call their lab and fax an order.”

“ I just used the bathroom and I cannot urinate.”

“No problem, I can give you as much water as you need to give us a sample. Once you leave the clinic, you automatically fail the test, so we want to be sure that you can leave a sample.”

“I only have a small portion of my medications. The others are stored elsewhere.”

“Some of the medications are with me and the others are at the school or with the other parent.”

“Please bring in what you have for a pill count. You will need to find someone else who can bring the other medications to the nearest pharmacy or bring to this clinic to be counted.”

“ I lost or flushed some of my pills.”

“Please bring in what you have left for medications.”

“My pills have been stolen.”

“I will need to let the provider know.”

“I don’t like being treated like a criminal.”

“I am sorry if we are making you feel like a criminal. Our providers are following the Maine law and are required to routinely monitor anyone on controlled substances.”

“I don’t have any transportation, I can’t get there.”

“Can you find a friend or family member who might be able to bring you? If you do not come in for your UDS or pill count, I will need to let the provider know and it could be a contract violation.”