

Virginia Board of Pharmacy Prescriptive Authority in Virginia

In Virginia all prescription drugs are categorized into schedules. Schedules I through V, for the most part, mirror the federal schedules. All prescription or legend drugs not included in Schedules II through V are placed in Schedule VI in Virginia and are also referred to as “controlled” drugs or substances within the Drug Control Act. This is sometimes confusing as the term “controlled” is usually applied only to drugs in Schedules II through V.

Before prescribing any drug in Schedules II-V, a practitioner must obtain a registration from the U.S Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA). The DEA registration must also be on any prescription written for a Schedule II-V drug.

Advanced practice registered nurses who meet certain criteria may be authorized to prescribe Schedule II-VI drugs by the Boards of Nursing and Medicine. Unless an advanced practice registered nurse has been authorized for autonomous practice, the authorization to prescribe schedules or categories of drugs will be set out in a practice agreement with a collaborating physician. Advanced practice registered nurses with prescriptive authority may dispense samples of those drugs they are authorized to prescribe and may also sign for the receipt of those samples.

Physician assistants who meet criteria and have been approved by the Board of Medicine for prescriptive authority may prescribe Schedule II-VI drugs that have been approved by the collaborating physician or podiatrist. A prescription written by a physician assistant for a Schedule II-V drug must include the name of the collaborating physician or podiatrist. Physician assistants may dispense samples of those drugs they are authorized to prescribe and may sign for receipt of samples.

Advanced practice registered nurses or physician assistants whose prescriptive authority is limited to Schedule VI are not legally required to have a DEA number but will possess a Virginia license. For advanced practice registered nurses, there is a 10-digit license number beginning with 0024, which should be on the prescription. To verify the license, click on “License Lookup” at www.dhp.virginia.gov using “Licensed Advanced Practice Registered Nurse” for the occupation. On the screen displaying the results of the individual’s licensure information, the phrase “Rx Authority” will appear under “Specialization” if the advanced practice registered nurse is authorized to prescribe drugs. For physician assistants, there is a 10-digit license number beginning with 0011, which can be verified through the web site www.dhp.virginia.gov under “License Lookup” and checking the occupation “Physician Assistant.”

Practitioners of medicine, osteopathy, podiatry, dentistry, or veterinary medicine have independent prescriptive authority and may prescribe drugs in Schedules II through VI.

Optometrists who have been certified to use therapeutic pharmaceutical agents have independent authority to prescribe and administer certain controlled substances and devices to treat diseases and abnormal conditions of the human eye and its adnexa in these categories:

1. Oral analgesics - Schedule II controlled substances consisting of hydrocodone in combination with acetaminophen and Schedule III, IV and VI narcotic and non-narcotic agents. They may also prescribe gabapentin in Schedule V.
2. Topically administered Schedule VI agents:
 - a. Alpha-adrenergic blocking agents;
 - b. Alpha-adrenergic agonists;
 - c. Anesthetic (including esters and amides);
 - d. Anti-allergy (including antihistamines and mast cell stabilizers);
 - e. Anti-fungal;
 - f. Anti-glaucoma (including carbonic anhydrase inhibitors and hyperosmotics);
 - g. Anti-infective (including antibiotics and antivirals);
 - h. Anti-inflammatory;
 - i. Cycloplegics and mydriatics;
 - j. Decongestants; and
 - k. Immunosuppressive agents.
3. Orally administered Schedule VI agents:
 - a. Aminocaproic acids (including antifibrinolytic agents);
 - b. Anti-allergy (including antihistamines and leukotriene inhibitors);
 - c. Anti-fungal;
 - d. Anti-glaucoma (including carbonic anhydrase inhibitors and hyperosmotics);
 - e. Anti-infective (including antibiotics and antivirals);
 - f. Anti-inflammatory (including steroidal and non-steroidal);
 - g. Decongestants; and
 - h. Immunosuppressive agents.

Inquiries as to the certification of an optometrist to prescribe therapeutic pharmaceutical agents or requests for regulations may be made by checking the web site www.dhp.virginia.gov under "on-line license lookup" and checking for the occupation "TPA certified optometrist." After June 30, 2004, every person who is initially licensed to practice optometry in Virginia must meet the qualifications for a TPA-certified optometrist.

In order to be valid, prescriptions must meet the criteria set forth in § 54.1-3303 of the Code of Virginia (attached). A prescription must be written in the context of a bona fide practitioner-patient relationship, for a medicinal or therapeutic purpose, and within the course of the professional practice of the prescriber. The elements that constitute a bona fide practitioner patient relationship are set forth in this statute.

Statutes:

[Va. Code § 54.1-3303](#)

[Va. Code § 54.1-3400 et seq.](#)