

Provider Bulletin # 18-03
**The Philadelphia Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual
disAbility Services (DBHIDS)**
Community Behavioral Health

TCA Urine Screening Prior Authorization
April 23, 2018

Beginning May 23, 2018, CBH will require prior authorization for urine screening for tricyclic antidepressants (TCAs). While reports of TCA misuse are not unheard of, the public health significance and implication on treatment planning are not well validated¹. As such, screening for TCAs should not be included in routine urine drug screening, and medical necessity criteria must be satisfied prior to coverage of urine testing for these compounds. CBH will cover medically necessary qualitative urine drug screens for TCA as follows:

1. Member presents with clinical signs/symptoms suggesting abuse/aberrant use of TCAs AND the provider can document the specific treatment plan changes that will be made as a result of a potentially positive screening test.
2. Oral or urine testing will not be covered when blood testing for tricyclics is performed simultaneously.

Please note that no changes are being made to blood/ serum TCA testing requirements, and prior authorization is only applied to urine screening for TCA. Please also note for purposes of assessing adherence to TCAs, adequate dosing, and toxicity risk (combined with electrocardiography), plasma TCA levels are superior; oral swab or urine testing should not be used for these indications.

For reference, the Urine TCA Request Form is included [below this bulletin](#); CBH will begin using this form on May 23, 2018 to process prior authorizations for TCA testing. Questions regarding this Bulletin and TCA testing can be directed Chris Tjoa, MD at 267-602-2004.

¹ Elizabeth A. Evans & Maria A. Sullivan, "Abuse and Misuse of Antidepressants," *Substance Abuse and Rehabilitation* 5 (August 2014) 14. doi: [10.2147/SAR.S37917](https://doi.org/10.2147/SAR.S37917).