



**OPIOID**  
EDUCATION FOUNDATION  
OF AMERICA

# A Guide to Safer Prescribing



# Virginia's Prescribing Law

Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Virginia:

§ 1. That the Board of Medicine and the Board of Dentistry shall amend their regulations to require that, prior to issuing a prescription for any opioid to treat acute or chronic pain, practitioners provide patient counseling. Such patient counseling shall include providing the patient with information regarding (i) the risks of addiction and overdose associated with opioid drugs and the dangers of taking opioid drugs with alcohol, benzodiazepines, and other central nervous system depressants; (ii) the reasons why the prescription is necessary; (iii) alternative treatments that may be available; and (iv) risks associated with the use of the drugs being prescribed, specifically that opioids are highly addictive, even when taken as prescribed, that there is a risk of developing a physical or psychological dependence on the controlled dangerous substance, and that the risks of taking more opioids than prescribed, or mixing sedatives, benzodiazepines, or alcohol with opioids, can result in fatal respiratory depression. The regulations shall require that the practitioner include a note in the patient's medical record that the patient has discussed with the practitioner the risks of developing a physical or psychological dependence on the controlled dangerous substance and alternative treatments that may be available. The regulations shall include an exception to the patient counseling requirement for patients who are (a) in active treatment for cancer, (b) receiving hospice care from a licensed hospice or palliative care, (c) residents of a long-term care facility, or (d) being prescribed an opioid in the course of treatment for substance abuse or opioid dependence.