FAQ – Prescribing psychostimulants for ADHD in the ACT -information for prescribers and pharmacists

General:

Q: What are the changes?

A: The ACT Government continues to support health practitioners to work to their full scope of practice where it is safe and appropriate to do so, while maintaining the safeguards required for the safe use of medicines.

On 16 December 2025, the ACT Government agreed to amendments to Medicines, Poisons and Therapeutic Goods Regulation 2008 to insert new section 554 (Standing CHO Approvals to prescribe controlled medicines in certain circumstances). This allows the CHO to issue a new controlled medicines Standing CHO Approval for designated prescribers under a notifiable instrument. This will authorise defined classes of health practitioners to prescribe certain controlled medicines in specified lower risk clinical circumstances.

On 8 January 2026, the Chief Health Officer made two new Standing CHO Approvals under section 554 available on the ACT Legislation Register.

- For GP ADHD continuation prescribing: https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2026-8/
  For non-GP specialists (designated prescribers: psychiatrists, paediatricians and neurologists): https://www.legislation.act.gov.au/ni/2026-9/

These changes have aligned closely with recent changes in New South Wales to assist with cross-border prescribing arrangements.

Summary of the changes (Standing CHO Approval for GP ADHD continuation prescribing)

For GPs prescribing:

- From 11 February 2026, a GP who has completed approved training and notified the Health and Community Services Directorate (Pharmaceutical Services Section), can **continue** prescribing stimulant medication for their patients with ADHD with the following eligibility requirements met:
  - Patient aged >6 years old
  - ADHD diagnosed in writing by psychiatrist, paediatrician, or neurologist
  - Not switching class of stimulant
  - Not prescribing above the specified dose range
  - Patient's ADHD is stable
- See the instrument, as above, for details
- Individual CHO approvals are not required within the above arrangements.
- A one-off Notification of intention to prescribe a controlled medicine under the Chief Health Officer standing approval must be submitted prior to prescribing under this arrangement.
- GPs must review and consider any relevant patient information in Canberra Script (the ACT's Real Time Prescription Monitoring System) before issuing a prescription for psychostimulant medicines.
- If a patient or their care falls outside of these eligibility criteria, GPs will continue to use shared care arrangements with a psychiatrist, paediatrician, or neurologist with an individual CHO approval for each patient.
- GPs who have not completed approved training, or have not submitted their intent to prescribe notification, will continue their usual shared care arrangements with their patient's psychiatrist, paediatrician, or neurologist

Summary of the changes (Standing CHO Approval for designated prescribers to prescribe controlled medicines for ADHD

For Psychiatrist, Paediatrician, or Neurologist prescribing:

- From 11 February 2026, any psychiatrist, paediatrician, or neurologist will no longer need to apply for individual CHO Approval when prescribing ADHD medication to treat patients aged 4 years and older within specified dosage ranges, as per the instrument, above.
- If a patient or their care falls outside of these eligibility criteria, psychiatrists, paediatricians and neurologists will continue to prescribe with an individual CHO approval for each patient.
- No additional training is required for designated prescribers.
- Designated prescribers must review and consider any relevant patient information in Canberra Script (the ACT's Real Time Prescription Monitoring System) before issuing a prescription for psychostimulant medicines.

Q: Why do I need to use Canberra Script?

A: It is a requirement of prescribing under the Standing CHO Approvals that you review and consider any relevant patient information in Canberra Script before issuing a prescription for psychostimulant medicines.

This requirement is because of the potential for misuse and diversion of stimulants and the risks associated with polydrug use of high-risk monitored medicines. The NSW Ministry of Health is also requiring GPs and relevant non-GP specialists to check NSW Safescript prior to prescribing.

Canberra Script makes it easier for you to see unusual patterns of prescribing and dispensing and can help you start conversations about the safe and effective use of monitored medicines with your patient.

Q: How do I register with Canberra Script?

A: You can register for Canberra Script through self-service registration via the **Canberra Script website**. You will need your:

- Ahpra number
- unique email address that is only accessible by you
- prescriber number (for prescribers only).

If you don't have an individual prescriber number,
email **itsupport.canberrascript@act.gov.au** to complete your registration.

Training for prescribers and pharmacists on the benefits and operation of Canberra Script is available via eLearning at any time, and/or may be requested via the Canberra Script team on canberrascript@act.gov.au (dedicated onsite/online sessions).

For General Practitioners

Q: What do I need to do to become a GP continuation prescriber?

- Complete approved training. You only need to complete one of the training options listed in the instrument or see the list of approved trainings in a later question.
- Ensure you understand the requirements of the Standing CHO Approval: including the criteria for eligible patients, approved dosage ranges, and what, if any, changes to ADHD treatment you can make.
- Submit the one-off form to notify ACT Health and Community Services Directorate that you have completed the training and intend to prescribe under the Standing CHO Approval: Notification of intention to prescribe a controlled medicine under the Chief Health Officer standing approval

Q: I am a GP registrar? Can I be a continuation prescriber?

A: If you are enrolled as a GP registrar in a recognised training program with the RACGP or ACRRM, you are able to prescribe within the requirements of the Standing CHO Approval.

Q: What are the approved training options?

A: A GP or GP registrar needs to complete at least one of the three Approved Training Courses listed in the table below prior to notifying the Health and Community Services Directorate of their intention to prescribe under the Standing CHO Approval.
Note: completion of an Approved Training Course means completion of all relevant modules (ie two modules for options (1) or (2), and three modules for option (3) in the table below).

1. RACGP GPlearning	Completion of 2 modules: • Identification and management of ADHD; and • The pharmacological management of ADHD
2. Medcast ADHD uncovered: a practical guide for GPs	Completion of 2 modules: • Diagnosis and management of ADHD; and • Pharmacological management of ADHD
3. The Academy by Psych Scene: ADHD Excellence Across the Lifespan	Completion of 3 modules: • Diagnosis and management of ADHD in childhood and adolescence; • A comprehensive guide to adult ADHD in general practice; and • Advanced ADHD psychopharmacology: Medications, neuroscience and prescribing guidelines for clinicians

Q: How do I notify the Health and Community Services Directorate that I have completed an Approved Training Course and wish to commence prescribing under the Standing CHO Approval?

A: Notify the Health and Community Services Directorate that you have completed the training using the Prescribing controlled and monitored medications one-off form.

You will receive acknowledgment by email after your notification has been processed, at which time you can prescribe under the Standing CHO Approval.

No further forms or notifications are required when prescribing under Standing CHO Approval.

Q: What are my additional obligations when prescribing under the Standing CHO Approval?

A: For every ADHD stimulant prescription for every patient:

- Ensure the patient is eligible for the Standing CHO Approval, for example, the medication is within the specified dose range
- Review and consider relevant patient information in the patient's Canberra Script profile
- Use only electronically generated prescriptions, either as an electronic prescription token or a computer-generated prescription printed from a clinical software system with integration to the Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA) National Data Exchange (NDE)

Note: Printed prescriptions generated by clinical software may also be signed manually and provided to the patient in paper form. All prescription particulars, including medicine details and directions for use, must be computer-generated. Handwritten prescriptions cannot be issued under this Standing CHO Approval.

Q: Can I change the dose of a psychostimulant medicine as a continuation prescriber?

A: Yes – minor dose adjustments can be made within the specified dose ranges:

Medicine	Maximum daily dose limit
Dexamfetamine	*50 milligrams*
Lisdexamfetamine	*70 milligrams*
Methylphenidate	*108 milligrams*

Q: Under the new Standing CHO Approval, can I switch a patient between short-acting and long-acting forms of the same medicine?

A: Switching to a different stimulant medicine class is not permitted (for example switching methylphenidate to dexamfetamine or lisdexamfetamine, or vice versa).

You can switch between different formulations of the same medicine (e.g. between immediate-release and controlled-release methylphenidate, or between dexamfetamine and lisdexamfetamine) provided the maximum daily dose is within the specified dose range outlined in the instrument.

Q: Why is switching medicine classes not permitted under the Standing CHO Approval?

A: This approach aligns with NSW to support cross-border arrangements. We understand that patients and prescribers may live and work across the border and consistency supports everyone. Switching between classes of medication involves initiation and titration and subsequent side effect management, therefore, it has been decided that this is outside of scope.

Q: Do I have to participate?

A: This pathway is optional. Existing shared care arrangements and individual CHO approval processes continue unchanged for:

- GPs who choose not to prescribe under the Standing CHO Approval; and
- patients who fall outside the eligibility conditions of the instrument.

Q: What if my patient falls outside of the conditions in the Standing CHO Approval criteria?

A: If you have a patient whose treatment has been initiated by a non-GP specialist, or their treatment does not comply with the requirements in the Standing CHO Approval, you can continue to apply for an individual CHO approval through the existing pathway with relevant written support from the non-GP specialist. (Prescribing controlled and monitored medicines - ACT Government)

Q: Do ADHD diagnoses made by doctors overseas qualify as a previous diagnosis?

A: No – the diagnosis must be made or confirmed by a medical practitioner in Australia who is recognised in the ACT as a designated clinician who can diagnose and initiate treatment. As at April 2026, this includes paediatricians, neurologists and psychiatrists.

Q: Can I apply to be a continuation prescriber if I work interstate (but see ACT resident patients)?

A: As long as all requirements are met, GPs outside of the ACT can apply to prescribe for their ACT patients under this Standing CHO Approval. Indeed, if a patient is to be collecting their medicines in the ACT, regardless of the jurisdiction their prescriber works in, the prescriber must comply with the Standing CHO Approval or apply for individual CHO Approval.

Q: Can I prescribe under this Standing CHO Approval for my NSW patients?

A: ACT GPs can apply to prescribe under a similar arrangement for their NSW patients to access their medications in NSW. See the NSW Health Expanding access to attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) management - information for continuation prescribers.

An ACT GP can prescribe under this arrangement for NSW patients if the medications are dispensed in ACT pharmacies.

Q: Will there be funding to do the training to be a continuation prescriber?

A: As at April 2026, support is currently available through the **ACT Professional Development and Wellbeing Fund** for the following training opportunities to support continuation prescribing (see Prescribing stimulants for ADHD - ACT Government):

- **RACGP GPlearning – ADHD (2 modules)** – non-member access
- **Medcast – ADHD Uncovered (2 modules)**
- **PsychScene – Adult ADHD Clinical Training Program (3-module series)**
- **PsychScene – Adult ADHD Clinical Training Program (6-course series)**

- **Australasian ADHD Professional Association (AADPA)** – one-year associate membership
- **Potential Face-to-Face ADHD Masterclass**

Support may include course fees, educational resources, and/or reimbursement for participation time (up to a set amount).

If you would like to receive the latest information on available and upcoming ADHD professional development opportunities, including being involved in Stage 2 for diagnosis and medication initiation, please register your details **here.**

Q: Can another doctor at my clinic who has not completed the required training and notified the Chief Health Officer, prescribe for a patient I have been prescribing for under the Standing CHO Approval?

A: No. A Standing CHO Approval to prescribe ADHD medicines is only available to prescribers who have completed the necessary training and submitted a notification form.

Unlike some other CHO approvals granted in response to a submitted application, a prescriber is unable to utilise another prescriber's Standing CHO Approval authority to prescribe ADHD medicines, even if working at the same medical practice.

Prescribers that are not subject to a Standing CHO Approval may continue to apply to the CHO for approval to prescribe a controlled medicine, with the relevant specialist support.

Prescribers are encouraged to contact the Health Protection Service at HPS@act.gov.au or (02) 5124 9117 should a submitted CHO approval application require urgent consideration for a CHO Approval, in the absence of the patient's prescriber who utilises the Standing CHO Approval.

Under these circumstances, HPS recommends you prescribe only the standard quantity required until the patient's usual GP returns to work, for example, one standard PBS quantity with no repeats.

Q: Is there still a requirement for a three yearly review by a specialist if I am prescribing under the Standing CHO Approval?

A: If you have completed the required training and informed the CHO of your intention to prescribe under the Standing CHO Approval, there is no longer a requirement for your patients to have a three yearly review from a specialist. You should continue to refer to the specialist if you have clinical concerns or the patient requires additional clinical expertise.

For those GPs who are choosing not to prescribe under the Standing CHO Approval and are operating under a shared care arrangement with a specialist, the patient will continue to be required to be reviewed by a specialist every three years.

Q: Do I still have to check the patient's profile in Canberra Script if the pop-up notification is a green tick?

A: Yes - It is a requirement of prescribing under the Standing CHO Approvals that you review and consider any relevant patient information in the patient's Canberra Script profile before issuing a prescription for stimulant medicines.

HCSD is progressing the required IT updates to Canberra Script to support this new Standing CHO Approval process. In the meantime, some alerts have been de-prioritised, and the pop-up notifications may not provide the complete picture for a patient's medications. As such, you must review your patient's profile in Canberra Script and not rely on the pop-up notifications.

Q: Does my patient need to go back to the specialist for a review if they have taken an extended break from taking stimulants?

A: Yes. If the patient has taken an extended break from taking their ADHD stimulant medication, they would not be considered a stable patient and therefore, would be required to see a psychiatrist, paediatrician or neurologist for a review. In this scenario, GPs should continue to apply for individual patient CHO Approval until such time as the non-GP specialist considers them to be stable and hands care to the GP.

Q: Do I need to check both Canberra Script and SafeScript NSW for patients who move between NSW and the ACT?

A: You must check Canberra Script if any of the below applies;

a) The patient has an ACT residential address
b) If you, as the prescriber, are prescribing within the ACT; or
c) If the medication is dispensed at a pharmacy in ACT

If you have concerns that the patient is also seeing an interstate or telehealth prescriber, having medication dispensed outside the ACT, or with a non-ACT address, we encourage you to check other jurisdictions' RTPM systems - SafeScript NSW for NSW, QScript in QLD etc.

Q: What do I need to do to be able to diagnose and initiate treatment for ADHD as a GP?

A: Further information regarding training requirements and other conditions of this authorisation will be provided later in 2026.

Non-GP specialists

Q: I am a non-GP specialist whose scope includes ADHD management (i.e. paediatrician, psychiatrist, neurologist). What do I need to know?

A: From 11 February 2026, non-GP specialists who provide ADHD diagnosis and management will be able to prescribe psychostimulant medicines for ADHD without seeking individual CHO approval if the patient and their treatment meets eligibility criteria (including specified dose ranges). The prescription must be an electronic prescription.

You must check Canberra Script when issuing a script for psychostimulant medicines for ADHD treatment under the Standing CHO Approval, including at initiation and for subsequent scripts. For patients who do not meet the eligibility criteria, or for prescriptions outside the specified dose range, the option of individual CHO approvals will remain (Prescribing controlled and monitored medicines - ACT Government).

Q: What are my additional obligations when prescribing under the Standing CHO Approval?

A: For every ADHD stimulant prescription for every patient:

- Ensure the patient is eligible for the Standing CHO Approval, for example their medication is within the specified dose range
- Review and consider relevant patient information in the patient's Canberra Script profile.
- Use only electronically generated prescriptions, either as an electronic prescription token or a computer-generated prescription printed from a clinical software system with integration to the Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA) National Data Exchange (NDE)

Note: Printed prescriptions generated by clinical software may also be signed manually and provided to the patient in paper form. All prescription particulars, including medicine details and directions for use, must be computer-generated. Handwritten prescriptions cannot be issued under this Standing CHO Approval.

Q: Can I issue handwritten prescriptions?

A: If prescribing under the new Standing CHO Approval, you must generate the prescription electronically, either as an electronic prescription token or a computer-generated prescription printed from a clinical software system with integration to the Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA) National Data Exchange (NDE).

Printed prescriptions generated by clinical software may also be signed manually and provided to the patient in paper form. All prescription particulars, including medicine details and directions for use, must be computer-generated. Handwritten prescriptions cannot be issued under the Standing CHO Approval.

For Pharmacists

Q: How will I know that someone has been issued a prescription under the new Standing CHO Approval criteria?

A: It is the responsibility of the prescriber to ensure they have authorisation to prescribe a controlled medicine prior to writing a prescription. This authorisation may be a CHO Approval, or under the Standing CHO Approval.

You should review all relevant prescribing and dispensing information in Canberra Script prior to dispensing a controlled medicine to ensure the safe and effective use of the medication. You should contact the prescriber if you have any clinical concerns regarding the prescription or the information presented in Canberra Script.

All pharmacists are encouraged to review the conditions of prescribing stimulants under the Standing CHO Approvals and to contact HPS at hps@act.gov.au if you require regulatory support, or have observed prescribing outside the Standing CHO Approval, without individual patient CHO Approval.

Q: Is there anything particular I need to check on the prescription?

A: You are required to ensure the prescription contains all the required particulars of a legal prescription. All prescription particulars, including medicine details and directions for use, must be computer-generated.

If you are concerned the prescription does not satisfy the conditions of the new Standing CHO Approval and the prescriber does not have an individual patient CHO approval, please contact the GP to discuss the matter in the first instance.

Please review the patient's Canberra Script profile prior to dispensing, to ensure no other prescriber is prescribing stimulants for the patient at the same time.

All pharmacists are encouraged to review the conditions of prescribing stimulants under the Standing CHO Approval and to contact HPS at hps@act.gov.au if you require regulatory support.