



**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
600 E. Boulevard Ave., Bismarck, N.D., 59505-0250**

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Contacts: Heather Steffl at 701-328-4933 or LuWanna Lawrence at 701-328-1892

Stop Overdose: Naloxone access expanded to ND pharmacies

BISMARCK, N.D. – Opioid overdose-related deaths can be prevented when naloxone is administered in a timely manner. As part of the “Stop Overdose” campaign, the North Dakota Department of Human Services Behavioral Health Division and North Dakota Board of Pharmacy, in collaboration with the Reducing Pharmaceutical Narcotics Task Force, are promoting the availability of naloxone. Naloxone saves lives by temporarily reversing the effects of opioid overdose.

The abuse of and addiction to opioids such as heroin and prescription opioid pain relievers is a public health concern across the state. According to the Centers for Disease Control, overdose deaths in North Dakota have increased from 20 deaths in 2013 to 43 deaths in 2014.

“Prescription opioid and heroin abuse has impacted individuals and families across the state,” said Behavioral Health Division Director Pamela Sagness. “We need to ensure individuals at risk of an overdose have access to the life-saving medication naloxone.”

While any individual who is prescribed an opioid pain medication may be at risk of an overdose, the following individuals have the highest risk:

- Individuals who use heroin or misuse prescription opioid pain relievers,
- Individuals who use opioids in combination with alcohol or other sedating drugs,
- Individuals with an opioid use disorder,
- Individuals who inject opioids,
- Individuals with an opioid use disorder who relapse after a period of abstinence (recent treatment or incarceration), and
- Individuals who recently experienced an overdose or were administered naloxone.

In response to the increase in overdose deaths in the state, the North Dakota Board of Pharmacy took action in April 2016. Using authority given by North Dakota lawmakers, the board began allowing all North Dakota pharmacists to prescribe naloxone to patients at risk of an overdose, their friends and family members, or other individuals in a position to assist in the event of an overdose.

“The enacted rules allow a trained pharmacist to prescribe and dispense naloxone rescue kits in accordance with a written protocol approved by the Board,” says Mark Hardy, Executive Director of the North Dakota Board of Pharmacy. “The Board encourages pharmacists and pharmacies to provide this service to their patients.”

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He said they have an important role in providing access to naloxone to prevent overdose deaths because pharmacists are recognized medication experts and are often the most readily accessible health care providers in local communities.

Individuals at risk of overdose, or who know someone at risk, are encouraged to speak with a physician or local pharmacist about getting a naloxone prescription.

Most private health insurance plans, Medicare, and Medicaid cover naloxone for the treatment of opioid overdose. Sold under the brand name Narcan or Evzio, naloxone can be given by nasal spray, injection, or auto-injector with no potential for addiction.

The Department of Human Services Behavioral Health Division, in collaboration with the Reducing Pharmaceutical Narcotics Task Force launched the Stop Overdose campaign in early May. This statewide campaign focuses on saving lives by sharing information and providing resources for those impacted by this public health concern, including prescribers, pharmacists, behavioral health counselors, first responders, family members, and friends.

To learn more about Stop Overdose, visit www.prevention.nd.gov/stopoverdose or contact the North Dakota Department of Human Services' Prevention Resource and Media Center at 1237 W. Divide Ave., Suite 1D, Bismarck, N.D., 58501, 701-328-8919, or ndprmc@nd.gov.

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