



Naloxone and Harm Reduction

6



In recent years, strategies for approaching substance use disorder have expanded to include programs that focus on reducing the negative health consequences for individuals who use substances and the community. When applied to the opioid crisis, these approaches can range from ensuring people who use drugs have access to naloxone and sterile syringes to equipping law enforcement officers with naloxone.

Strategies of this type fall under the umbrella concept of harm reduction. Harm reduction attempts to meet substance users “where they are at” and to help them minimize harmful effects of drug use. This can include providing disease prevention education and assistance in finding support services. Harm reduction practitioners provide people who use substances with options that can lead to treatment and recovery, but harm reduction’s core philosophies include not stigmatizing people for substance use or forcing them into treatment.

In the past few years, a number of Colorado coalitions and nonprofits have started harm reduction programs. Most notably, the Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Behavioral Health and the Colorado Attorney General have funded programs to increase the availability of naloxone (also known as Narcan or Evzio) for law enforcement and first responders. Naloxone is an FDA-approved medication that can temporarily reverse an opioid overdose until life-saving treatment can be administered.

In this chapter, you will find information about naloxone and other harm reduction concepts and tactics. Use this section if you are:

- Interested in obtaining naloxone for your organization or community;
- Considering hosting an event to train people to use naloxone;
- Interested in developing harm reduction programs in your community;
- In need of educational resources about naloxone or harm reduction.

About Naloxone

Naloxone is a medication approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) to prevent overdose death caused by opioids such as heroin, morphine, fentanyl, hydrocodone (Vicodin), and oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet). It reverses an overdose by counteracting

the effect opioids have on the central nervous and respiratory systems. When a person has overdosed on opioids, their breathing will slow and could stop. Naloxone will reverse the effect of the opioid and allow a person to resume breathing. Naloxone only works to

reverse an opioid overdose for 30 to 90 minutes. After administering naloxone, someone should call 911 and for the overdose victim to seek medical attention.

Naloxone can be obtained by individuals at risk of an overdose or by their friends and families. Naloxone can and should be obtained by anyone who is using prescription opioids or lives with someone using prescription opioids.



In 2018, the U.S. Surgeon General issued a landmark advisory to the public on naloxone and opioid overdose. The statement says:

“For patients currently taking high doses of opioids as prescribed for pain, individuals misusing prescription opioids, individuals using illicit opioids such as heroin or fentanyl, health care practitioners, family and friends of people who have an opioid use disorder, and community members who come into contact with people at risk for opioid overdose, knowing how to use naloxone and keeping it within reach can save a life.”

More information is available on the Surgeon General’s website, www.surgeongeneral.gov/priorities/opioid-overdose-prevention/naloxone-advisory.html.

Naloxone has no effect on someone who has no opioids in their system, it does not cause a high, and is not addictive.

Many emergency medical responders and law enforcement officers carry naloxone and have been trained to use it. But naloxone isn’t just for first responders—the medication can be administered by anyone, whether they have been trained or if they are following instructions included in a naloxone kit. A growing number of communities are hosting events to train people how to use naloxone to save a person who has overdosed.

Additional Information

A detailed introduction to naloxone can be found on the National Institute on Drug Abuse website, www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/opioid-overdose-reversal-naloxone-narcan-evzio.



Currently, three forms of naloxone are available. Generic naloxone kits include a vial of medication that is either injected or, with the addition of an atomizer, used as a nasal spray. Narcan is a prefilled nasal spray device. Evzio is a prefilled auto-injection device that provides verbal instructions during use.

The Colorado Consortium for Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention has created a brochure with information about identifying and reversing an opioid overdose using naloxone. It can be found at www.corxconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/Naloxone-Brochure.pdf. The Office of Behavioral Health also has a brochure about naloxone you can download and order at liftthelabel.org/contact.

People interested in learning more about using naloxone should consult the brochures and the resources listed in this chapter.

Naloxone in Colorado

Naloxone has become increasingly available in Colorado. Since 2015, consumers in the state have been able to buy naloxone from participating pharmacies without getting a prescription. They are able to obtain the medication because the state’s chief medical officer created a “standing order,” which removes the need for a prescription. All 100 state legislators voted to make this possible in the state of Colorado. Almost all 50 states allow pharmacies to sell naloxone without a prescription.

As of 2017, more than 500 pharmacies in Colorado carry naloxone. You can find those pharmacies by visiting stoptheclockcolorado.org/map.

A growing number of law enforcement agencies are equipping their personnel with naloxone. As of June 2019, 201 law enforcement agencies in the state carry naloxone and have been trained to use it.

The Office of Behavioral Health has distributed more than 16,000 naloxone kits as part of the State Targeted Response to the Opioid Crisis grant. As of April 2019, more than 1,000 overdoses have been reversed by people using naloxone distributed through this program.

The Office of the Attorney General launched the Naloxone for Life initiative in 2016, which has provided 7,500 naloxone kits to law enforcement officers and first responders. The initiative is a collaborative effort supported by the Consortium, Denver Health, and the Harm Reduction Action Center (HRAC) in Denver. Experts from Denver Health, HRAC, and the Evans Police Department conducted trainings around the state as part of the initiative. 201 law enforcement departments in the state are currently carrying it.

In summer 2019, the state will launch a public awareness campaign to spread the message that naloxone saves lives, can be obtained by members of the public, and is easy to administer.

Colorado also has a “Good Samaritan Law,” which provides immunity from criminal prosecution for people who suffer or report an emergency drug or alcohol overdose. Details about the law are in the resources below.

Public health departments and harm reduction organizations such as HRAC (www.harmreductionactioncenter.org) are leading advocates for expanding naloxone access.

Resources

Consortium Naloxone Information Web Page

The Consortium has posted information about naloxone and a number of useful links at www.corxconsortium.org/naloxone.

Patient Opioid Safety and Naloxone Use Pamphlet

This pamphlet explains the signs of an opioid overdose, the different types of naloxone, and how it should be used. View the pamphlet at www.corxconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/Naloxone-Brochure.pdf.

Lift the Label Naloxone Brochure

This pamphlet, intended for members of the public,

explains the signs of an overdose and how to obtain and administer naloxone. It can be downloaded at liftthelabel.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/04/9036_CDHSOBH_NaloxoneToolkit_Digital_041618.pdf.

Naloxone Locator

Any pharmacy in Colorado is able to provide naloxone, although some locations might not have naloxone in stock. Use the StopTheClockColorado.org website to find pharmacies that carry naloxone. The site is online at StopTheClockColorado.org/map.

Information for Pharmacists

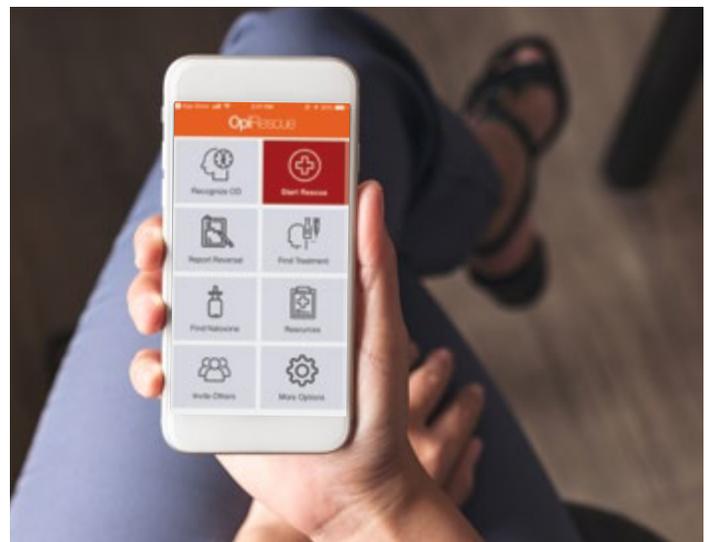
The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment and the Consortium have produced a handout for pharmacies about naloxone and state policies. It is downloadable at www.corxconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/Naloxone-pharmacy-FAQ.pdf.

Standing Orders

The Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment has a website about naloxone and the standing order. It is available at www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/naloxoneorders.

Certain factors or characteristics can increase someone’s risk for opioid overdose. Read the list in the appendix to this chapter online, located at www.corxconsortium.org/communityreference, to learn who should have naloxone prescribed/dispensed to them.

OpiRescue



OpiRescue is a free, easy-to-use smartphone application. The app walks a first responder or a lay person through identifying an overdose, calling for help, administering naloxone in its various forms, providing life-saving assistance, and reporting the incident. For first responders, there is also an option for the report to be sent to their department to save time and log data. The OpiRescue app can be downloaded from the Apple App Store, Google Play, and the OpiRescue website, opirescue.com.

OpiRescue HQ

OpiRescue HQ is a reporting and analytics program for first responder departments throughout the United States. It provides departments with data to better understand where overdoses are happening in their area. Access for Colorado first responder agencies has been paid for by the Colorado Department of Human Services, Office of Behavioral Health. Information is online at opirescue.com/first-responders.

Prescribe to Prevent

Prescribe to Prevent is a website created by naloxone access and overdose prevention advocates, including prescribers, pharmacists, and public health workers. It is for providers who want to make naloxone available to their patients, but it also has information for pharmacists and patients. Its website is prescribetoprevent.org.

Sample Naloxone Policy for Law Enforcement

The Evans Police Department has created a policy for its officers about administering naloxone that other departments can use as a model. The policy is posted online at www.corxconsortium.org/wp-content/uploads/Law-Enforcement-Naloxone-policy.pdf.

Colorado Good Samaritan Law

Colorado enacted a law in 2012 that provides immunity from criminal prosecution for people who suffer or report an emergency drug or alcohol overdose event. They are immune from arrest and prosecution for possession of small amounts of most substances and drug paraphernalia, and for the use of a controlled substance or consumption of alcohol by an underage individual. To comply with the law, the individual must

report the event in good faith to a law enforcement officer, 911, or a medical provider; stay at the scene; and identify themselves and cooperate with law enforcement once they arrive. Additionally, the individual must not have any previous warrants out for their arrest. The bill can be found online at harmreductionactioncenter.org/HRAC_DOCUMENTS/LEGAL/SB.20.pdf.

Information about this law and other harm reduction legislation can be found at www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/colorado-public-health-harm-reduction-legislation.

National Institute on Drug Abuse

NIDA has created a webpage with information about naloxone and a link to additional resources. The page is available at www.drugabuse.gov/drugs-abuse/opioids/naloxone.

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

SAMHSA's Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit is available online at store.samhsa.gov/product/Opioid-Overdose-Prevention-Toolkit/SMA18-4742.

How to Bulk Purchase Naloxone Kits

The company that manufactures the Narcan nasal spray, ADAPT Pharma, offers government entities, first responders, law enforcement, health departments and other community-based organizations a discounted price for bulk purchases. Email customerservice@adaptpharma.com or call (844) 462-7226 for more information.

About Harm Reduction

There is no universally accepted definition of harm reduction. Practitioners and advocates instead share ideas and strategies with the goal of reducing the negative consequences associated with drug use. One outcome is improved health of the drug user and the public health of the community. For more information, visit the Harm Reduction Coalition's website, harmreduction.org.

Common harm reduction strategies include distributing naloxone to at-risk communities and training people how to administer it; running syringe exchange programs, where people who inject drugs can obtain clean syringes and lower their risk of obtaining HIV or Hepatitis C; and providing educational and support services that link substance users to treatment and recovery services.

Harm Reduction in Colorado

The CDPHE maintains resources about harm reduction, including an explanation of key concepts, material for substance users, and a list of syringe exchange programs. The site is at www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/reducing-infections-injection-drug-use.

Colorado has a small but growing number of organizations that employ harm reduction strategies. Here are links to some of the organizations that have been active through spring 2019.

- Harm Reduction Action Center (Denver): harmreductionactioncenter.org
- Southern Colorado Harm Reduction Association (Pueblo): www.socoharmreduction.org
- Boulder County Works program: bouldercountynarc.org
- Points West Syringe Services Program (Jefferson County): www.jeffco.us/2134/Points-West-Syringe-Services-Program
- San Luis Valley Health Access Risk Reduction Project (Alamosa): Contact Charlotte Ledonne at (719) 589-4977

- Western Colorado AIDS Project (Grand Junction): www.coloradohealthnetwork.org/western-colorado-aids-project
- Northern Colorado AIDS Project (Fort Collins): www.coloradohealthnetwork.org/northern-colorado-aids-project/syringe-exchange.

For a complete list with hours and locations, please visit www.colorado.gov/pacific/cdphe/reducing-infections-injection-drug-use

The Consortium's Harm Reduction Work Group

The Consortium's Harm Reduction Work Group (formerly the Naloxone Work Group) advocates for the health, wellbeing, rights, and dignity of people who use substances by supporting organizational, clinical and public policy approaches/strategies that have the potential to save lives and reduce potential harms of substance use. The work group focuses on supporting harm reduction services throughout Colorado, including overdose awareness and broad access to naloxone, broad access to safe injection supplies and facilities, HIV and hepatitis C testing and linkage to care, and harm reduction-based criminal justice reforms.

If you have an interest in this area or have questions about this topic, reach out to the program manager at pm@corxconsortium.org. If you would like to join or get more information about the work group, please visit www.corxconsortium.org/harmreduction. You can also join by emailing info@corxconsortium.org.

Harm Reduction Work Group Co-Chairs

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