



FLORIDA HOSPITAL ASSOCIATION

POLICY DOCUMENT

# DISPENSING NALOXONE

ISSUE BRIEF

MARCH 2023

## Summary

Opioid use and deaths from overdoses are rapidly increasing. Effective medication (Naloxone) is available to reverse opioid overdoses. FHA supports widespread education efforts on the availability, use, and effectiveness of Naloxone as one means of reducing overdose deaths.

### Florida's Opioid Overdose Deaths "By the Numbers"

Since the early 2000s, the use of prescribed and illegal opioids has increased significantly. Opioids are a class of drugs that includes heroin, fentanyl, oxycodone, codeine, and morphine. From 2015 to 2021, 31,293 Floridians died due to opioid overdose.

- From May 2021 to May 2022 alone, Florida reported 7,942 overdose deaths, equal to 661 overdose deaths each month and nearly 22 a day.<sup>1</sup>
- Approximately one person dies from an opioid overdose every eight minutes.
- On average, 20,847 individuals are discharged from Florida emergency departments for opioid-related diagnoses each year, and 23,489 are admitted on an inpatient basis with an opioid-related diagnosis.
- Fentanyl is the leading cause of overdose deaths<sup>2</sup>.
- In Florida, fentanyl was listed as the cause of death in 91% of drug overdose deaths in 2020. This was a 63% increase (2,058) over the number of deaths in 2019.

Naloxone can reverse an opioid overdose and prevent death. Hospitals are encouraged to dispense more than one Naloxone kit for at-risk patients when they are discharged from an inpatient stay or emergency department. Having the treatment readily available for the at-risk patient is an important first step in decreasing the chances of relapse and readmission.

Although Naloxone is an effective treatment for individuals experiencing overdose, it is not always readily available, and misconceptions about its permitted use remain.

<sup>1</sup> Florida Health Charts, Opioid Overdose

<https://www.flhealthcharts.gov/ChartsDashboards/rdPage.aspx?rdReport=SubstanceUse.Overdose>

<sup>2</sup> (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2022) [Opioids Leading Cause of Overdose](#)

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## What is Naloxone?

Naloxone is an emergency opioid antagonist that rapidly reverses the effects of an overdose and is an essential tool to reduce overdose deaths. An opioid works by decreasing a person's pain receptors and increasing the release of dopamine and the feeling of euphoria. Due to the combined effects of the drug on the brain receptors, it can become addictive, and a life-threatening overdose can occur when an excessive amount of an opioid overwhelms the receptors. An opioid overdose can result in fatal complications to an individual's respiratory system and an accelerated heart rate.

Naloxone is a safe and effective emergent treatment; it has short-term effects lasting approximately 30 – 90 minutes. Naloxone attaches itself to the opioid receptors and reverses and blocks the effects of opioids that can depress breathing and cause heart rate irregularities. It is a safe and effective treatment that can be easily administered by a non-medical professional to anyone experiencing an acute opioid overdose. Once the first dose is administered, the individual will quickly regain regular breathing and heart rate will decelerate. Medical attention following Naloxone administration is essential to improve the individual's odds of survival, when administered in appropriate timespan. If a person has a large amount of opioids in their system or a potent opioid like fentanyl, multiple doses of Naloxone may be required.

## FDA Approved Naloxone<sup>3</sup>

- NARCAN (naloxone hydrochloride nasal spray, 8mg and OTC 4mg)
- ZIMHI (naloxone hydrochloride injection)
- Kloxxado (naloxone hydrochloride nasal spray 8 mg)
- Teva (generic brand of Narcan, naloxone hydrochloride nasal spray)

## Legislation

[Senate Bill 544](#): Drug-related Overdose Prevention by Senator Jim Boyd passed during the 2022 Legislative Session. The law amended section 381.887, Florida Statute, to address barriers to distribution and dispensing of naloxone. The law allows pharmacists to order and dispense Naloxone to a patient or caregiver without a prescription. The law also authorizes law enforcement officers, correctional officers, and child protective investigators to possess, store, and administer Naloxone. It permits public schools to purchase and store the medication securely on school premises. The law requires hospital emergency departments and urgent care clinics to report incidents involving a suspected and actual overdose to the Florida Department of Health when the individual does not arrive via EMS or law enforcement transport.

Such reports must be made using an appropriate method with secure access, including, but not limited to, the [Washington/Baltimore High Intensity Drug Trafficking Overdose Detection Mapping Application Program](#), the [Florida Prehospital EMS Tracking and Reporting System \(EMSTARS\)](#), or another program identified by department rule. If a hospital emergency department or an urgent care center reports such an incident, it must use its best efforts to make the report to the department within 120 hours after becoming aware of the incident.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> [FDA Approved Naloxone](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Reporting of controlled Substance Overdoses- F.S. 395.1041](#)

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## Current Status

In 2021, a new authority was granted under Section 465.019, Florida Statutes, which allows all authorized prescribers to prescribe, and hospital pharmacies to dispense, a limited supply of medicinal drugs to emergency department patients and inpatients upon discharge when the prescriber determines the medicinal drug is warranted and community pharmacy services are unavailable. In the case a prescription is required, it is instructed to prescribe the patients with up to 48 hours of supply.

Hospitals with Class II and III pharmacies are now authorized to dispense a Naloxone kit to at-risk patients upon discharge from the hospital in the emergency department or inpatient. For hospitals without that classification, a 'meds to beds' model is recommended as an alternative.

On February 15<sup>th</sup>, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) advisory committees; [Nonprescription Drugs Advisory Committee, and Anesthetic and Analgesic Drug Products Advisory Committee](#) unanimously recommended over-the-counter access to Narcan (Naloxone nasal spray). Final approval was given at the end of March 2023. Narcan now can be sold in vending machines, convenience stores, supermarkets, big box stores, and online.<sup>5</sup> Although OTC availability could make opioid reversal medication more easily accessible, the need for free Naloxone kits and community-based distribution programs remains. The pending cost and access to transportation to obtain the medication are still potential barriers. This action can help reduce the stigma associated with substance use disorder and provide broader access to Narcan.

## Distribution in the Community

In addition to hospitals, various community-based organizations, including syringe exchange sites, law enforcement, emergency medical services, public schools, and county health departments, can distribute Naloxone. [ISaveFL](#), in collaboration with the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF) and Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), have created an online resource and toolkit to locate free naloxone kits for individuals at risk of experiencing an opioid overdose.

Community Overdose Prevention Program Examples:

- DCF's Statewide Opioid Overdose Prevention provides Naloxone (4mg doses) to county health departments and eligible community organizations with standing orders, policies, and protocols for community distribution and training.
- Through a partnership with the Florida Harm Reduction Collective and [NEXT Distro](#) offers free mail based Narcan (Naloxone kits) distribution to residents.
- The State Department of Health's [Helping Emergency Responders Obtain Support \(HEROS\) Program](#) provides free naloxone to emergency response agencies (law enforcement, firefighters, EMTs, paramedics, correctional officers and correctional probation officers).

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<sup>5</sup> [FDA Advisory Committee Presentation](#)

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## Hospital Enrollment for Free Naloxone Kits

The Department of Children & Families (DCF) Overdose Prevention Program (OPP) encourages hospitals and health systems to enroll in the [Narcan kit program](#).

Currently, 394 organizations are enrolled in the program to dispense naloxone nasal spray kits, with approximately 469,000 take-home kits distributed since the inception of the program in 2016. To date, over 27,000 overdose reversals have been reported. There are a total of 59 participating hospitals in [27 out of 67 counties](#) across the state enrolled in the program to dispense naloxone nasal spray kits. Now that county health departments are distributing, Naloxone kits are available statewide without the requirement of a health care professional.

To enroll in the DCF Overdose Prevention Program (OPP) please submit your [application here](#) or contact:

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Or

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## Resources

- [FHA Myth vs. Fact of Naloxone](#)
- [FLORIDA DEPARTMENT OF LAW ENFORCEMENT 2021 INTERIM REPORT](#)
- [NATIONAL INSTITUTE ON DRUG ABUSE: NALOXONE DRUG FACTS](#)
- [NARCAN OFFICIAL WEBSITE](#)
- [CDC: STOP OVERDOSE](#)
- [SAMHSA: NALOXONE](#)
- [DCF: ANNUAL STATE EPIDEMIOLOGICAL OUTCOMES WORKGROUP \(SEOW\) REPORT PATTERNS AND TRENDS OF THE OPIOID EPIDEMIC IN FLORIDA](#)
- [DCFNARCANENROLLMENTPACKET.PDF \(SEFBHN.ORG\)](#)
- [RESOURCES - I SAVE FLORIDA](#)
- [DEPARTMENT OF CHILDREN AND FAMILY SLIDES](#)
- [EMERGENCY TREATMENT FOR SUSPECTED OPIOID OVERDOSE](#)
- [INSTITUTIONAL PHARMACIES ; PERMITS](#)
- [ACEP OPIOID RESOURCE PAGE](#)
- [2021 Annual Report - FDLE Medical Examiners Commission](#)
- [Why the FDA May Allow Overdose Drug Naloxone to be Sold OTC \(healthline.com\)](#)