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DPH Clearinghouse Naloxone Distribution FAQ's

What is the Naloxone Distribution Project?

The DPH Clearinghouse Naloxone Distribution Project (NDP) is funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and administered by the Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) to combat opioid overdose-related deaths throughout California. The NDP aims to reduce opioid overdose deaths by providing free intranasal naloxone spray to the public.

What is Naloxone?

Naloxone is a life-saving medication that reverses an opioid overdose. It has few known adverse effects and no potential for abuse. Naloxone is not a controlled medication. While it requires a prescription, states and local governments have passed legislation to decrease the barriers to this life-saving medication and made it available without a prescription under a standing order.

How does naloxone work?

Naloxone reverses an opioid overdose by blocking the opioid receptors in the brain from opioids like heroin, fentanyl, and opioid pain medications. The reversal effects are temporary and last between 30 to 90 minutes. It takes a few minutes for naloxone to start working. If an individual does not respond after approximately three minutes, the second dose of naloxone is given.

Is naloxone safe?

Yes, naloxone is a safe medication that reverses an opioid overdose. Naloxone should be used even if you're unsure what kind of drugs someone took and they are suspected of an opioid overdose.

Are there any major contraindications to naloxone?

There are no contraindications to naloxone unless there is a known allergy to naloxone or components of the intranasal naloxone spray.

What is NARCAN (naloxone HCl) Nasal Spray?

NARCAN Nasal Spray is the commercial name of the intranasal formulation of naloxone.

Can naloxone be used for a fentanyl overdose?

Yes. Fentanyl is a potent opioid, and naloxone can be used in a fentanyl-related overdose. Since fentanyl is a powerful opioid, additional doses of naloxone may be required to reverse the overdose.

How much does it cost to obtain naloxone through the NDP?

The medication is free.

How can naloxone be given without a prescription?

Naloxone distributed by this program is distributed under a naloxone standing order that allows community organizations that are not currently working with a physician to distribute naloxone to a person at risk of an opioid-

related overdose or to a family member, friend, or other people in a position to assist. The standing order allows for administering naloxone by a family member, friend, or other people to a person experiencing or reasonably suspected of experiencing an opioid overdose. (California Civil Code Section 1714.22).

Is training required to distribute naloxone?

Yes. The staff of community clinics, organizations, and other entities distributing naloxone under the NDP and a standing order must receive opioid overdose prevention training and instruct individuals on using naloxone.

Do minors need parental consent to receive naloxone and education?

If possible, the minor and their parents or guardians should be involved in the education and distribution of naloxone. There could be situations where naloxone is distributed to a minor, but the involvement of parents or guardians is not possible or advisable. The minor's risk factors to experiencing or witnessing an opioid overdose and their maturity should be considered when determining whether they would benefit from naloxone. The distribution of naloxone under the standing order is not a prescription per se and, therefore, would not need parental consent. The standing order for the distribution of naloxone did not restrict the age of individuals who may receive naloxone and education. Additionally, under current California naloxone access laws, a person who gives out naloxone under a prescription or standing order is not subject to civil action, criminal prosecution, or professional review for distribution (CA Civ Code § 1714.22 (2020)).

Does California have a Good Samaritan Law?

Yes. Individuals administering naloxone according to the law and in good faith will not be subject to professional review, be liable in a civil action, or be subject to criminal prosecution for this administration, except in cases of gross negligence or willful & wanton misconduct.

Do minors have the right to confidentiality about their substance use?

Yes. While it is required to involve parents or guardians in the minor's mental health treatment, a minor has the right to confidentiality about their substance use. The minor's consent is required to disclose their substance use. The exceptions that permit the communication of relevant facts to the parents or guardian involve: a.) the minor lacking capacity to make a rational decision on whether to consent to the disclosure to parents or guardian and b.) if there is a substantial threat to the minor's life or physical wellbeing such that the disclosure of relevant facts to the parents or guardian may reduce that threat. The confidentiality policies are more restrictive for clinics that meet specific criteria under 42 CFR Federal policies.

Can we distribute naloxone to our clients only?

Naloxone can be distributed to a person at risk of an opioid-related overdose or to a family member, friend, or other people in a position to assist. Staff members can receive naloxone under this program.

Are there any NDP documentation requirements for naloxone distribution?

The NDP requires tracking the number of known opioid reversals with naloxone. However, there are no requirements to document the distribution of naloxone kits to individuals in the community. The DPH Clearinghouse requires programs to document the training of their staff.