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Wolf Administration: Third Naloxone Standing Order Allows Naloxone to be Obtained by Mail

Harrisburg, PA – The Wolf Administration today announced that Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine signed an updated naloxone standing order which permits community-based organizations to provide naloxone by mail.

“Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose,” Secretary of Health Dr. Rachel Levine said. “Since 2018, we have provided free naloxone kits through public events to more than 10,000 Pennsylvanians, and first responders have further assisted in getting naloxone into the community. However, we know that there are challenges in getting naloxone to people in need, particularly during a global pandemic, and this standing order will work to assist with that. It is important that people know that treatment works, and recovery is possible.”

In 2016, Dr. Levine issued a [standing order](#) for any Pennsylvanian to get naloxone at a pharmacy for anyone who may need it. The standing order may be used by those who are at risk of experiencing an opioid-related overdose, or their family members, friends or other person who are in a position to assist a person at risk of experiencing an opioid-related overdose. This updated standing order allows for community-based organizations to obtain naloxone and provide it to individuals either in person or by mail.

“A key component to decreasing the number of overdose deaths in Pennsylvania is permeating naloxone in communities and public venues,” said DDAP Secretary Smith. “When dealing with an epidemic like the opioid crisis, life-saving medication should be a part of every first aid kit and readily available. We encourage everyone – business owners, members of the general public, loved ones affected by substance use disorder, and individuals suffering from the disease - to equip themselves to respond in an emergency.”

In addition to this standing order, naloxone is carried at most pharmacies across the state year-round. Naloxone is available at pharmacies to many with public and private insurance either for free or at a low cost. In addition, naloxone has also been made available through the Pennsylvania Commission on Crime and Delinquency’s Centralized Coordinating Entities, free public naloxone giveaways at Pennsylvania Health Centers, partnerships with Pennsylvania colleges and universities, and distribution to narcotic treatment providers throughout the commonwealth.

The Opioid Command Center, established in January 2018 when Gov. Wolf signed the first opioid disaster declaration, meets every week to discuss the opioid crisis. The command center is staffed by personnel from 17 state agencies and the Office of the Attorney General, spearheaded by the departments of Health and Drug and Alcohol Programs. The command center recently [released a strategic plan](#) highlighting accomplishments to date and providing a roadmap for the continued work to help those with substance use disorder.

“The opioid crisis does not discriminate, we know it has affected everyone regardless of location, socioeconomic class, gender, race or ethnicity,” said Ray Barishansky, Deputy Secretary of Health

Preparedness and Community Protection and Incident Commander for the Opioid Crisis. “The Opioid Command Center remains committed to assisting Pennsylvanians in all ways possible who are affected by this crisis, and we believe this is another opportunity to do so by putting naloxone into the hands of the public. As COVID-19 has continued to provide renewed opioid concerns in many parts of the state, we are working tirelessly to ensure we have the ability to help those in need.”

Data show that in 2019, more than 4,300 people died from a drug overdose. This represents a nearly 19 percent decrease in drug overdose deaths from 2017.

Work to address the opioid crisis focuses on three areas: prevention, rescue and treatment. Efforts over the past several years, working with state agencies, local, regional and federal officials, have resulted in significant action to address the opioid crisis:

- The Prescription Drug Monitoring Program has reduced opioid prescriptions by 34 percent and has virtually eliminated doctor shopping.
- The number of people receiving high dosages of opioids (defined as greater than 90 morphine milligram equivalents per day) has dropped 53 percent since the PDMP launched in August 2016.
- The Opioid Data Dashboard and Data Dashboard 2.0 has provided public-facing data regarding prevention, rescue and treatment.
- 11 Pennsylvania Coordinated Medication Assisted Treatment (PacMAT) programs are serving as part of a hub-and-spoke model to provide evidence-based treatment to people where they live, with just under \$26 million dedicated into the centers.
- More than 45 Centers of Excellence, administered by the Department of Human Services, provide coordinated, evidence-based treatment to people with an opioid use disorder covered by Medicaid. The COEs have treated more than 32,500 people since first launching in 2016.
- The waiver of birth certificate fees for those with opioid use disorder has helped close to 4,800 people, enabling easier entry into recovery programs.
- A standing order signed by Dr. Rachel Levine in 2018 allowed EMS to leave behind more than 2,400 doses of naloxone.
- Education has been provided to more than 6,600 prescribers through either online or face-to-face education.
- 882 drug take-back boxes help Pennsylvanians properly dispose of unwanted drugs, including 178,540 pounds of unwanted drugs in 2019.
- The Get Help Now Hotline received close to 38,700 calls, with nearly half of all callers connected directly to a treatment provider.
- The state prison system has expanded their Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) program, which is viewed as a model program for other states.
- A body scanner pilot project was successful in reducing overdoses and violent crime in a number of facilities. Body scanners are in place in more than 30 locations and are currently being expanded to additional facilities.
- Several agencies have worked together to collaborate on the seizure and destruction of illicit opioids across Pennsylvania.
- Education and training on opioids have been provided to schools. Future plans are in place to make opioid education a standard component of their school-based training.
- The coordination with seven major commercial providers has expand access to naloxone and mental health care, while also working to make it more affordable.
- Naloxone has been made available to first responders through the Commission on Crime and Delinquency, with more than 63,400 kits made available and close to 12,700 saves through that program. More than half of those saves, 6,633, occurred in 2019.
- EMS have administered more than 40,600 doses of naloxone and more than 10,000 doses were made available to members of the public during the state’s naloxone distribution last year.

For more information on Pennsylvania’s response to the opioid crisis visit www.pa.gov/opioids.