



News Release

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Orange County Health Department to Offer Naloxone in an Effort to Decrease Opioid Overdose Deaths

Orange County, NC (October 23, 2013) – The Orange County Board of Health and the Orange County Health Department have announced plans to become the first North Carolina Health Department to issue a standing order for the life-saving medication [naloxone](#) beginning in December 2013.

Naloxone, also known as Narcan, quickly and effectively reverses overdose caused by opioid medications such as the prescription painkillers Oxycontin and hydrocodone. If given in time, naloxone can prevent death from opioid overdose.

Due to SB20, the Good Samaritan Law/ Naloxone Access passed in the Spring of 2013, it is now possible for doctors to prescribe naloxone via a standing order, and for a person who is prescribed the drug to administer it to someone experiencing an opioid overdose. Under the law, a doctor can prescribe naloxone to a person at risk of opioid overdose, as well as that person's friends and family members.

According to the N.C. State Center for Health Statistics, the state has seen an increase in overdose deaths by over 300% since 1999. Many of these deaths are preventable through training and access to naloxone.

Medical providers at the Health Department will screen patients to determine if they or someone they know uses opioids. If so, the provider will discuss the safe use of opioids, train them to administer naloxone in case of a suspected overdose, and provide access to naloxone.

"We know that screening patients and increasing access to naloxone is an effective and inexpensive way to save lives, and we hope it will help people get connected to additional resources to help themselves or people they know", says Dr. Colleen Bridger, Orange County Health Director.

The new naloxone policy is part of a larger effort prioritized by the Board of Health to decrease substance abuse, misuse and overdose, and increase access to mental health services in Orange County. Board of Health Vice-Chair Corey Davis, JD, MSPH, adds, "We

are excited to be the first Health Department to offer naloxone under the new law (SB 20), and we hope that others will quickly adopt this evidence-based, cost-effective, and lifesaving policy.”

Background

Additional efforts related to substance abuse and misuse includes partnering with Healthy Carolinians of Orange County (HCOC) to increase community education and empowerment to reduce substance abuse and misuse. Most recently Healthy Carolinians has installed drug drop-boxes in the Hillsborough, Chapel Hill, and Carrboro Police Departments.

Efforts by the Board of Health, Health Department, and Healthy Carolinians are based in part on work in Wilkes County through Project Lazarus. In Wilkes County, the Project Lazarus framework, which includes provision of naloxone, contributed to a decrease in deaths due to opioid overdose by 69% in only two years.

SB20 Good Samaritan Law/ Naloxone Access

(Source: [The Network for Public Health Law](#))

Effective April 9, 2013. This law states that individuals who experience a drug overdose or persons who witness an overdose and seek help for the victim can no longer be prosecuted for possession of small amounts of drugs, paraphernalia, or for underage drinking. The purpose of the law is to remove the fear of criminal repercussions for reporting an overdose and to instead focus on efforts on getting help to the victim.

The Naloxone Access portion of SB20 provides civil and criminal immunity to prescribers who prescribe and bystanders who administer naloxone, or Narcan, an opiate antidote which reverses opioid overdose. SB20 also allows community based organizations to dispense Narcan under a prescriber’s standing order.

To see more about the work of the Orange County Board of Health, visit their webpage at <http://www.orangecountync.gov/health/BoardofHealthlinks.asp>.

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