

Access to Naloxone to Reduce Overdose Deaths

Naloxone is an essential harm reduction intervention that saves lives. By rapidly reversing and blocking the effects of an opioid overdose, naloxone can restore breathing within two to three minutes. It is available as both a nasal spray and intramuscular injectable. Naloxone has an excellent safety profile, as reported adverse side effects are extremely rare, and it has no psycho-pharmacological effects or addictive potential. Despite this, naloxone access, training, and education remains limited in the United States.

Research has indicated there is a growing need to expand access to this life-saving medication to combat the overdose crisis and reduce overdose deaths in the United States:

Access to naloxone reduces opioid overdose deaths:

- From 1996 to 2014, 136 community-based harm reduction organizations distributing naloxone recorded 26,000 overdose reversals.
- In states that have adopted naloxone access laws and/or Good Samaritan laws, overdose deaths decrease, especially among Black people.
- Adding naloxone distribution to community-based syringe services programs is associated with a significant reduction in overdose deaths.
- One country found that establishing a national naloxone distribution program resulted in a 36% reduction in opioid-related overdose deaths among formerly incarcerated people.
- Policies and laws that grant pharmacists direct authority to dispense naloxone are associated with a significant decrease in overdose deaths.



Andressa Granado & Kara Sepulveda doing a Naloxone Administration demonstration at a small business community harm reduction training—Quinnipiac Valley Health District, New Haven, CT. March 2021. Photo Credit: Graham MacIndoe

26,000

136 community-based harm reduction organizations distributing naloxone recorded **26,000 overdose reversals**.

1,300,000

In 2020, Remedy Alliance/
For The People ordered
and distributed **1.3 million**
doses of naloxone.

Naloxone is in high demand, and people access naloxone through an array of avenues:

- From 1996 to 2014, community-based harm reduction organizations in the United States trained and distributed naloxone to over 150,000 people.
- As of 2020, 33 US states have a statewide standing order or pre-written prescription for naloxone to make the medication more accessible. Since 2012, naloxone dispensing from pharmacies has increased across all states.
- Remedy Alliance/For The People, a national collective of harm reduction programs, ordered and distributed 1.3 million doses of naloxone in 2020.
- NEXT Distro, a program that mails naloxone to people, reports responding to over 37,000 naloxone requests between 2020 and 2021.



Andressa Granado – Public Health Navigator, Quinnipiac Valley Health District, New Haven, CT. March 2021. Photo Credit: Graham MacIndoe

Not everyone has equal access to naloxone:

- Common barriers to naloxone access include cost, lack of insurance coverage, issues with prior authorization, stigma, and inadequate naloxone education for patients.
- When compared to Black individuals, a 2020 report found that white people are significantly more likely to have naloxone access, training, and use.
- Rural counties have the lowest rates of naloxone dispensing and are three times more likely to be a low-dispensing county than metropolitan areas.
- For people without insurance who purchase naloxone through a pharmacy, as of July 2022, the average price of one dose of generic intramuscular naloxone is \$39.72 and the average price of two Narcan nasal sprays is around \$100. Remedy Alliance/For The People offers at-cost intramuscular naloxone for harm reduction programs and health departments who are distributing free of charge.
- Though recently incarcerated people are significantly more likely to die by overdose post-release, only a small percentage of US jails and prisons have take-home naloxone programs.

Stay Connected

Twitter.com/VitalStrat

Facebook.com/vitalstrategies

Instagram.com/vitalstrategies

vitalstrategies.org

About Vital Strategies

Vision

A world where everyone is protected by equitable and effective public health systems.

Mission

We work in partnership to reimagine evidence-based, locally driven policies and practices to advance public health.