

Overdose Prevention Campaign

A Drug
Policy
Alliance
campaign.

Naloxone Executive Summary

Drug Overdose is a Major Public Health Problem

Nationally, drug overdose fatalities more than doubled between 1999 and 2005. In New Jersey, overdose is now the leading cause of accidental death. Almost 6,000 people have died from drug overdoses in New Jersey since 2004. More than 700 people died from drug overdoses in New Jersey in 2009 alone.

Drug Overdose Deaths are Preventable

The majority of overdose victims do not actually die until one to three hours after they have taken a drug, and most of these deaths occur in the presence of others. This leaves a significant amount of time for witnesses to intervene and call for medical help. In addition to calling 911 for help, witnesses to opiate overdoses can administer the opioid overdose antidote, naloxone. It is standard practice for emergency personnel to administer naloxone when summoned to the scene of an overdose, and precious time can be saved and deaths prevented if laypeople who witness an overdose have the ability to administer naloxone as well. It has no addictive properties and few side effects, making it safe for laypeople to administer.

States Have Responded by Passing Laws to Expand Access to Naloxone

Ten states, Virginia, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Massachusetts, New Mexico, New York, Rhode Island, North Carolina and Washington State, as well as the District of Columbia, have enacted laws providing legal protection from civil or criminal liability for medical professionals and laypeople who prescribe or administer naloxone to those at risk for drug overdose death. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, naloxone distribution programs across the country have reported more than 10,000 overdose reversals by laypeople administering naloxone to individuals experiencing opioid overdoses.

In 2008, the U.S. Conference of Mayors passed a resolution calling for a comprehensive approach to overdose prevention, including implementation of programs to provide access to naloxone. In 2012, the American Medical Association passed a resolution encouraging the establishment of naloxone distribution programs.

Conclusion

New Jersey must implement a comprehensive public health strategy to prevent overdose deaths. A key component in that strategy is passage of Assembly Bill 3095/Senate Bill 2082, which expands access to the life-saving opioid overdose antidote, naloxone, by providing legal protections to medical professionals and laypeople. Providing legal protection to medical professionals will increase the likelihood that they will prescribe and dispense naloxone to those at risk for opioid overdose. Providing legal protection to laypeople will encourage them to administer naloxone in overdose situations where every second counts.