

DPH to Distribute Overdose Reversing Medication Naloxone March 2, 2019 at Attack Addiction 5K

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First event in DPH Community Naloxone Distribution Initiative

NEW CASTLE (Feb. 13, 2019) – In an effort to reduce the number of individuals overdosing, and dying from drug overdoses in Delaware, the Division of Public Health (DPH) is announcing the Community Naloxone Distribution Initiative. DPH will distribute free naloxone kits to members of the general public, at events in each county in March. The first event will be held on Saturday, March 2, 2019, in conjunction with the annual atTAcK addiction 5K race starting at St. Peter’s Church 515 Harmony St., New Castle, DE 19720. The remaining dates and event locations will be announced as details are finalized.

Each naloxone kit will contain two doses of naloxone, and members of the community who attend these events will receive one-on-one training on how to administer the overdose-reversing medication. The Division of Substance Abuse and Mental Health (DSAMH) also will have representatives on hand to answer any questions about access to treatment for those struggling with substance use disorder.

“It is critically important for family and friends of loved ones struggling with addiction to have access to naloxone,” said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. “The data are telling us that 80 percent of overdoses happen in a residence. If family or friends of someone overdosing have naloxone immediately accessible, it can mean the difference between life or death for that person.”

Within three to five minutes after administration, naloxone can counteract the life-threatening respiratory depression of an opioid-related overdose and stabilize a person’s breathing, which buys time for emergency medical help to arrive. DPH recommends calling 9-1-1 immediately if you find someone in the midst of a suspected overdose, starting rescue breathing, and then administering naloxone. Naloxone is not a replacement for emergency medical care and seeking immediate help and follow-up care is still vital.

There were at least 291 deaths last year in Delaware from suspected overdoses. Tragically, the final number is expected to exceed 400 after all toxicology screens are finished (they take six-eight weeks) and final death determinations are made on outstanding cases by the Division of Forensic Science. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention ranked Delaware as number six in the nation for overdose deaths in 2017.

“We are incredibly excited to partner with DPH to provide them with a host site for their first Community Naloxone Distribution event,” said David Humes, a board member of atTAcK addiction. “It seems like a natural extension of the event’s purpose. I made a vow after losing my son Greg six years ago to a heroin overdose that I would save a life in his name. By partnering with DPH and expanding access to naloxone in the community this way, atTAcK addiction continues to save lives and keep the memory of all of our loved ones alive.” Individuals who would like a naloxone kit on March 2, do not have to be a 5K participant.

In 2018, first responders administered 3,728 doses of naloxone, compared to 2,861 in 2017, a 30 percent increase.

Funding for the Community Naloxone Distribution Initiative comes from state funding built into DPH's budget for the first time in state fiscal year 2019, thanks to the advocacy of Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long and the Behavioral Health Consortium. In October, DPH also announced the agency was awarded federal funds to support the purchase of naloxone and other programs for first responders.

“This is about saving lives,” said Lt. Governor Hall-Long. “The more naloxone we have in our communities the more lives we can save, allowing us to connect people with the resources to begin their road to recovery. I applaud the work of the Behavioral Health Consortium, the Division of Public Health and our community advocates to help expand access to this life saving medication.”

Community access to naloxone has increased significantly since 2014 when legislation was enacted making it available to the public. In 2017, Governor John Carney signed additional legislation ensuring pharmacists had the same legal protections as doctors, peace officers and good Samaritans when dispensing the medicine without a prescription.

Information on community training and pharmacy access to naloxone, along with resources regarding prevention, treatment and recovery are available on HelpIsHereDE.com.

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