



National Judicial Opioid Task Force

Naloxone Use in the Courthouse

A Judicial Bench Card

Can opioids cause a person to overdose?

Yes. Opioids, whether illegal or prescribed as pain medication, can cause an overdose. Common opioids that can lead to abuse, addiction, and/or overdose include, but are not limited to: hydrocodone, oxycodone, codeine, morphine, methadone, buprenorphine, fentanyl, and heroin.

What are the signs of an opioid overdose?

All first responders and others charged with public safety should be trained to recognize the symptoms of an opioid overdose. These include, but are not limited to: no response to outside stimuli; unable to speak; unconscious; breathing less than eight times per minute; choking or gurgling sounds; blue or grey lips and fingertips; and a limp body.

What should I do in the case of an opioid overdose in my courtroom?

If someone is determined to have overdosed: call 911; administer naloxone; perform CPR (rescue breathing and chest compressions); and monitor the person's response.

If the person does not awaken between two to three minutes: administer a second dose of naloxone.

Naloxone administration training can be done in as little as 15 minutes and should be provided to anyone who may come in contact with an overdose victim.

What is naloxone?

Naloxone is a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose within a few seconds to several minutes. By blocking the opioid receptor sites, naloxone reverses the toxic effects of an overdose and helps an overdose victim resume breathing. Naloxone does not reverse the effects of other drugs and has no potential for abuse.

How is naloxone administered?

Naloxone can be administered via an intramuscular or subcutaneous injection (generic or through an autoinjector called Evzio®) or intranasally (generic or by a nasal spray called Narcan®).

What can I expect once an overdose victim awakens?

Upon receiving naloxone, an overdose victim immediately goes into opioid withdrawal which can cause the following symptoms: muscle pain; nausea and vomiting; sweating; diarrhea; chills; increased blood pressure; aggressive behavior; and a host of other symptoms.

What should I do with the overdose victim after his or her overdose is reversed?

The overdose victim should be encouraged to get help for his or her opioid use disorder. Ideally, the person should be referred to treatment and, if clinically warranted, put on medication-assisted treatment. At the very least, the person should be encouraged to go to the nearest emergency department for a crisis evaluation.

Getting and paying for naloxone varies among and between states. Check your state and local health departments and state laws to learn about how to obtain and purchase naloxone.

Should my courthouse have a naloxone policy in place?

Every courthouse should follow a state or county procedure that specifies: where naloxone is kept in the courthouse for quick access; the proper way to administer naloxone; who should be responsible for the naloxone supplies; the protocol for what to do once the overdose victim is revived; and filing a post-incident report.

Who should be responsible for the naloxone supplies?

A designated person in the courthouse should oversee and inspect the naloxone supplies. He or she should be responsible for: replacing the supplies when they are depleted or have expired; where and how the supplies are stored; keeping track of how often the supplies are used; ensuring that an incident report is completed and filed; and guaranteeing that courthouse staff is trained, in regular intervals, on the administration of naloxone.

Addiction Policy Forum, Overdose Reversal Toolkit: <https://www.addictionpolicy.org/overdose-awareness>

National Drug Court Institute, Naloxone: Overview and Considerations for Drug Court Programs: <https://www.ndci.org/resources/naloxone-overview-and-considerations/>

Prescribe to Prevent: <https://prescribetoprevent.org/>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit: <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Opioid-Overdose-Prevention-Toolkit/SMA18-4742>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit, Five Essential Steps for First Responders:

<https://store.samhsa.gov/system/files/five-essential-steps-for-first-responders.pdf>

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Naloxone FAQ: <https://www.samhsa.gov/medication-assisted-treatment/treatment/naloxone>

Temple University's Law Atlas, Prescription Drug Abuse Policy System, Naloxone Overdose Prevention Laws: <http://pdaps.org/datasets/laws-regulating-administration-of-naloxone-1501695139>

