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October 23, 2019

SAPC BULLETIN NO. 19-04

TO: Los Angeles County Substance Use Prevention and Treatment
Provider Network

FROM: Gary Tsai, M.D., Interim Division Director 
Substance Abuse Prevention and Control

SUBJECT: NALOXONE ADMINISTRATION AND AVAILABILITY

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health, Substance Abuse Prevention and Control Division (SAPC) issues this bulletin mandating that each prevention, treatment, and Recovery Bridge Housing (RBH) location maintains naloxone onsite, and staff are trained and capable of administration in the event of a possible opioid overdose; and that providers make naloxone distribution, education and training available to treatment patients served.

BACKGROUND

The opioid epidemic has impacted individuals, families, and communities across the United States, leading to six times more opioid (including prescription opioids and illegal opioids like heroin and illicitly manufactured fentanyl) overdose deaths in 2017 compared to 1999, with 400,000 lives lost from opioids during that time period.¹

Illicitly manufactured fentanyl and other high-potency synthetic opioids are increasingly being mixed with heroin or other drugs like cocaine and methamphetamine, often without the knowledge of users. Fentanyl and other high-potency synthetic opioids are also illegally manufactured into counterfeit pills that resemble commonly misused prescription medications, such as pain pills or sedatives (e.g., Xanax). The rapid proliferation of these practices has

¹ Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Opioid Overdose – Understanding the Epidemic. <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/epidemic/index.html>. Accessed April 9, 2019.

resulted in significant unpredictability in illicit drugs and considerably increased the risks of fatal overdoses.

Research has shown that opioid overdose deaths can be reduced by making naloxone and opioid overdose education available to community members.² Naloxone is a short-acting opioid antagonist that is administered when an individual is showing signs of opioid overdose, namely slowed or stopped breathing. Naloxone typically reverses life-threatening effects within a matter of minutes and precipitates opioid withdrawal in individuals who have used opioids recently. Due to the high potency of fentanyl, overdoses on fentanyl and other high potency opioids sometimes require multiple doses of naloxone. Given that the effects of naloxone can wear off, emergency medical services should be activated in all cases of suspected opioid overdose.

Naloxone is not a controlled medication, has no street value, and is not addictive. It has minimal side effects if administered to someone who has not used an opioid. It can be administered by non-clinical and lay individuals in three different formulations – injectable, intranasal, and auto-injectable. Additionally, California's 911 Good Samaritan law provides limited protection for people who seek medical assistance during a suspected overdose emergency.³

NALOXONE AVAILABILITY

Naloxone must be available at each prevention, treatment, and RBH location in the event of a suspected opioid overdose; and must be made available to individuals who are at personal risk for opioid overdose, even when enrolled in treatment or pursuing recovery. Providers may also elect to distribute naloxone to those (e.g., family members, outreach workers) who encounter individuals who are at-risk for opioid overdose, such as those who misuse/overuse opioids or other substances which could be laced with opioids.

Naloxone is available as follows (see *Attachment 1* for more details):

- Prescribed to Specific Individuals
 1. Medi-Cal beneficiaries via the pharmacy benefit of fee-for-service (FFS) Medi-Cal.
 2. Drug Medi-Cal (DMC) beneficiaries in Opioid Treatment Program (OTP) settings.
 3. My Health LA beneficiaries would need to obtain their naloxone prescription via the community clinic from which they are assigned for MHLA or via general distribution.
- General Distribution – Provider Agency Obtains and Stocks Naloxone for General Distribution to Individuals Served via a two-part process under the California Department of Health Care Services (DHCS) Naloxone Distribution Project
 1. Apply online for a naloxone standing order from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH); and

² Walley AY, Xuan Z, Hackman HH, et al. Opioid overdose rates and implementation of overdose education and nasal naloxone distribution in Massachusetts: interrupted time series analysis. *BMJ (Clinical research ed.)*. 2013; 346: f174.

³ Drug Policy Alliance; Understanding California's 911 Good Samaritan Law.

http://www.drugpolicy.org/sites/default/files/DPA_Fact%20Sheet_California%27s%20911%20Good%20Samaritan%20Law.pdf
Accessed April 9, 2019.

2. Submit an online application to DHCS for a desired number of naloxone doses. Refer to *Attachment 2* for detailed instructions.

TRAINING

All prevention, treatment, and RBH staff must receive and successfully complete training on the administration of naloxone, including consideration for the specific formulation of naloxone that is/are utilized and distributed at respective provider sites. Prevention, treatment, and RBH staff are also expected to train clients, and when applicable community members, on naloxone administration. Naloxone training resources are available on the Safe Med LA website (www.SafeMedLA.org) under the “Naloxone” section of the Resources page.

POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Each prevention/treatment provider agency and RBH site must develop a policy and procedure that outlines compliance with this Bulletin, and which will be reviewed during monitoring visits.

In its ongoing efforts to optimize prevention, treatment, and recovery, SAPC aims to make naloxone available to every client who is at-risk for an opioid overdose and Medications for Addiction Treatment (MAT) available as a treatment option for all individuals with alcohol or opioid use disorder.

If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Dr. Lello Tesema, SAPC Associate Medical Director of Prevention, at ltesima@ph.lacounty.gov or (626) 293-2941.

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Attachments

Attachment 1: Naloxone Availability in Substance Use Prevention and Treatment Systems

Key

- **DHCS:** California Department of Health Care Services
- **FFS:** Fee-for-Service
- **My Health LA (MHLA):** Health program for individuals who are not eligible for Medi-Cal (e.g., undocumented individuals)
- **OTP:** Opioid Treatment Program (aka: methadone clinics)

Agency Category		Access to Naloxone				
		General FFS Medi-Cal		Drug Medi-Cal	My Health LA (MHLA)	DHCS Naloxone Distribution Project**
		Dispensed through Pharmacy via Pharmacy Benefit <i>Prescriber gives prescription and client picks up at pharmacy</i>	Dispensed Onsite via Medical Benefit <i>Program stocks naloxone and dispenses it on site</i>	Dispensed Onsite <i>Provider agency stocks naloxone and dispenses it on site</i>	<i>MHLA patients either need to go to the community clinic from which they are assigned for MHLA, or can also be given naloxone from the DHCS Naloxone Distribution Project (see column on right)</i>	Dispensed Onsite <i>Program stocks naloxone and dispenses it on site</i>
Treatment	Non-OTP Settings*	X	N/A	N/A	As applicable, depending on patients that meet MHLA criteria	N/A
	OTP Settings	X		X		
Prevention	Prevention provider	N/A				X
	Syringe Exchange Programs					

*Non-OTP settings include: Outpatient, Intensive Outpatient, Residential, and Withdrawal Management settings

**DHCS Naloxone Distribution Project is a statewide grant for naloxone that requires applying for naloxone doses via online application process

Attachment 2: Free Naloxone Resources Through the California Department of Public Health and Department of Health Care Services

<p>Purpose:</p>	<p>The Department of Health Care Services' (DHCS) Naloxone Distribution Project is an initiative to prevent deaths due to opioid-related overdose by expanding access to naloxone.</p>
<p>Eligibility:</p>	<p>If you serve individuals who are currently using or are in recovery from prescription opioid or heroin use, naloxone is an overdose prevention medication <i>that saves lives</i>. All SAPC providers should have this medication accessible in the event of a suspected opioid/heroin overdose and for distribution to client/patients and their loved ones.</p> <p>The Naloxone Distribution Project allows community-based organizations, first responders, homeless, and other eligible providers to apply for free naloxone.</p>
<p>How to Apply:</p>	<p>To obtain FREE naloxone, complete this simple two-step application process:</p> <p>STEP 1: Complete the Online Application to obtain a "Standing Order."</p> <p>Providers need a "standing order" to <i>distribute</i> naloxone, before being able to request naloxone. The online application takes just a few minutes and the "standing order" is immediately available once the application is completed</p> <p>Request a "Standing Order" at California Department of Public Health (CDPH) Online Application</p> <p>STEP 2: Complete the Online Application to Request Naloxone.</p> <p>DHCS will send Naloxone directly to your agency. Visit DHCS' Naloxone Distribution Project (NDP) website and select the NDP Application link to complete the request naloxone.</p>
<p>Training:</p>	<p>To participate in the Naloxone Distribution Project, all staff must receive opioid overdose prevention and treatment training. This includes trainings for individuals who receive naloxone from your organization. For more information: click here.</p>
<p>More Information:</p>	<p>Follow these links to CDPH's website to learn more:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Standing Order FAQ • Online Application Page for Standing Order • For questions: naloxonestandingorder@cdph.ca.gov • Administering Naloxone Training Video <p>Follow these links to DHCS' website to learn more:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Naloxone Application • Program FAQ • For questions: DHCSMATExpansion@dhcs.ca.gov
<p>References: To access any of this information, or if the links above are not working, go to: https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/DCDIC/SACB/Pages/Naloxone-Standing-Order.aspx https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/individuals/Pages/Naloxone_Distribution_Project.aspx</p>	