

**Health department fights opioid epidemic thanks to naloxone grant**

The Whitley County Health Department has received a supply of overdose rescue kits from the Indiana State Department of Health (ISDH) to distribute to the community in an effort to help prevent fatal opioid overdoses. The kits contain naloxone hydrochloride, a non-narcotic medication that reverses the life-threatening respiratory failure that is usually the cause of overdose deaths. Naloxone is not a treatment for addiction, but a life-saving tool, much like an AED or EpiPen. This type of Naloxone is administered like a nasal spray and no harm can be done to an individual by using this life-saving medication. Naloxone is also known by the trade name, Narcan®.

“I want people to feel safe to come get a kit for themselves or a loved one without repercussion or fear of turning them in to the authorities. We are here to help people” says public health nurse, Heather Reid. To obtain a kit, you will need to schedule an appointment with Heather by calling (260) [248-3121](https://www.google.com/search?rlz=1C1GCEA_enUS841US841&ei=bDyVXOesOozljwTDyaSABw&q=health+department+near+me&oq=health+depar&gs_l=psy-ab.1.0.0i71l8.0.0..2477...0.0..0.0.0.......0......gws-wiz.DQ5qkyaKiqY). The anonymous training lasts about 30 minutes.

Organizations are also able to obtain a Naloxone kit for their place of business. “We need to be prepared to encounter someone experiencing an overdose. We should choose to protect our community and the citizens in it” says health educator, Carlee LaRue.

ISDH data show that in 2017, 1,852 Hoosiers died of drug poisoning, while nearly 8,200 people visited Indiana emergency departments due to nonfatal opioid overdoses.

The Whitley County Health Department is a registered naloxone dispenser at [www.optIN.in.gov](http://www.optIN.in.gov), which lists entities that carry naloxone. Individuals in need of naloxone can request it from a registered entity using a statewide standing order signed by State Health Commissioner Kristina Box, MD, FACOG. Individuals do not need to obtain a prescription from a private healthcare provider so long as they are requesting naloxone from an entity registered at [www.optIN.in.gov](http://www.optIN.in.gov).

Naloxone is approved by the Food and Drug Administration and has been used for more than 40 years by emergency medical services personnel to reverse opioid overdose and revive people who might have died without treatment. It is not addictive, and although it is only effective at reversing overdoses of opioid drugs like heroin or prescription painkillers, it is not harmful if administered to someone who has not taken opioids.

For information on treatment for substance use disorder, visit the Indiana Family and Social Services Administration’s Division of Mental Health and Addiction website at https://www.in.gov/fssa/addiction/In partnership with the FSSA and in use and/or execution of funding from the 21st Century Cures Grant and the Governor’s Office.