

News You Can Use

Your monthly resource for news and information about behavioral health and intellectual/developmental disabilities in western North Carolina and beyond

Preventing overdose deaths, one kit at a time

Smoky invests in NARCAN® overdose reversal kits for WNC

We're investing \$100,000 to save lives in 23 western N.C. counties by funding the purchase of 2,668 NARCAN® opioid overdose reversal kits.

CEO Brian Ingraham announced the initiative, a partnership with the N.C. Harm Reduction Coalition (NCHRC), at a March 22 news conference at our Asheville headquarters. NCHRC representative Conner Adams, who demonstrated how NARCAN® naloxone nasal spray works, told the Asheville Citizen-Times the donation was "incredibly important."

"We have been in a naloxone shortage, so without this we would be struggling pretty hard to get it to people," the Citizen-Times [quoted Adams as saying](#). Speakers also included state Sen. Terry Van Duyn, Buncombe County Sheriff Van Duncan, Smoky Chief Medical Officer Dr. Craig Martin and Tessie Castillo, NCHRC advocacy and communications coordinator.

NARCAN® is an opioid antagonist and can be administered by any person, in any location, while awaiting emergency assistance. Used correctly, the nasal spray can reverse the effects of an overdose on opioid drugs, such as heroin and prescription painkillers. The nasal spray provides a consistent, safe and easy-to-administer dose of naloxone and serves as an alternative to injectable forms that may use syringes.

Nationally, the rate of opioid overdose deaths has increased 200 percent since 2000, and unintentional drug overdoses threaten to become the leading cause of accidental death in North Carolina. In January, the governor's Mental Health and Substance Use Task Force Opioid Abuse Subcommittee, co-chaired by Ingraham, recommended increasing access to naloxone to help fight this epidemic.

"Our sheriffs, hospital administrators and treatment providers here in western North Carolina are all on the same page: heroin and opioid addiction is a very real problem throughout the region," Ingraham said. "The state task force saw an epidemic stretching to all corners of the state. True solutions will take hard work by many people over many years, and this initiative will both save lives in the here and now and pave the way for future efforts."

The NCHRC has more than 160 official distributors who dispense overdose rescue kits that include naloxone throughout the state, said Robert Childs, NCHRC executive director. "Through them we have distributed more than 22,000 kits since August 2013, which in turn have saved nearly 2,300 people's lives from potential overdose deaths," he said in a statement. "Smoky's contribution will allow us to expand our reach even more to people at risk of overdosing or who know someone who is at risk."

If you would like to receive an overdose rescue kit, contact Hyun Namkoong with the NCHRC at 919-218-4505 (call or text) or at hnamkoong88@gmail.com. NARCAN® is effective in reversing overdoses due to heroin and prescription painkillers such as OxyContin and Fentanyl. It does not affect overdoses due to tranquilizers such as Xanax, stimulants or alcohol.

Our NARCAN® initiative is one of a dozen projects to reinvest Medicaid savings back into local communities. Additional news coverage of the announcement is available from [ABC News13](#) and [North Carolina Health News](#).

