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INTERNATIONAL OVERDOSE DAY: DOH TO PROVIDE LIFESAVING NALOXONE THROUGH COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENTS TO REDUCE SUBSTANCE ABUSE DEATHS

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Tallahassee, Fla. – Today, on International Overdose Awareness Day, the Florida Department of Health announced an initiative to ensure readily available access to naloxone, a lifesaving medication that could reduce thousands of substance abuse deaths across the state, through its county health departments.



Naloxone is a medication that reverses the effects of an opioid overdose, restoring breathing and consciousness within minutes of being administered to a person who has overdosed.

Increasing access to naloxone is a key component in battling the opioid epidemic, especially in rural areas or counties with limited access to health care. Providing naloxone through county health departments will increase support to individuals across the state dealing with substance use disorder and help prevent overdose deaths in Florida.

“Addressing the opioid epidemic is a top priority for the state,” said **Deputy Secretary for Health Dr. Kenneth A. Scheppeke**. “In 2021, almost 8,000 people in Florida lost their lives to drug overdoses, the highest one-year total ever recorded in our state.”

This expansion is a result of collaboration with the Florida Department of Children and Families through the Overdose Prevention Program, or [iSaveFL](https://www.flhhs.gov/iSaveFL), which facilitates the distribution of naloxone kits to families, friends, and caregivers of those at risk for an opioid overdose. These naloxone kits consist of two naloxone nasal sprays that can be administered even without a health care professional present.

This effort complements the Florida Department of Health’s [HEROS](https://www.flhhs.gov/HEROS) (Helping Emergency Responders Obtain Support) program that provides free naloxone to emergency response agencies.

“The iSaveFL website provides information on finding naloxone in your community as well as resources on treatment, overdose education and prevention,” said **County Health Systems Statewide Medical Director Dr. Ulyee Choe**. “A big part of this

initiative will be educating the community and working with partners to address the opioid epidemic.”

Through the initial phase of this initiative, 16 county health departments (Baker, Bradford, Union, Franklin, Gulf, Gadsden, Gilcrest, Levy, Glades, Hendry, Hamilton, Hardee Jefferson, Madison, Lafayette, and Suwanee) received 1,500 naloxone kits. The next phase of this initiative will expand naloxone distribution to all 67 county health departments in Florida.

This initiative is part of the state’s response to the overdose crisis. This month, Governor Ron DeSantis launched the [Coordinated Opioid Recovery](#) (CORE) program – the first of its kind in the nation – to provide comprehensive and sustainable care to those affected by substance use disorder.

A public health and safety alert was also deployed by the Florida Department of Health on July 8, 2022 to ensure Floridians remain vigilant of the signs of overdose. This alert can be found [here](#). Print and digital educational materials that help Floridians identify signs of an overdose and how to respond can be downloaded [here](#).

Where is substance use disorder assistance available?

For questions regarding potential overdoses and other drug-related exposures, Florida’s Poison Control Centers are a valuable resource to individuals throughout Florida, including emergency personnel. Poison Control Centers are staffed by health care professionals that are specifically trained to provide assistance in treating drug overdoses or assessing patients exposed to drugs of abuse. Medical toxicologists are available 24/7 for physician consultations. For poisoning questions or emergencies, call 1-800-222-1222. Visit the website at floridapoisontcontrol.org.

[HEROS](#) (Helping Emergency Responders Obtain Support) is a Florida Department of Health program that provides **free** naloxone to emergency response agencies. Since the inception of the program in 2018, over 455,000 doses have been distributed to emergency response agencies in Florida through HEROS. All first responders in Florida are eligible to request free naloxone through this program. More information can be found [here](#).

If you or your organization are interested in obtaining or managing naloxone for the community, please visit [I SAVE FL](#) to find available resources through the Florida Department of Children and Families.

The [Hope for Healing](#) website is a tool for Floridians to access help for mental health and substance abuse. The site is an aggregator of federal, state, local, private sector, faith-based and non-profit resources. The Hope for Healing initiative has focused not only on helping Floridians find resources in challenging times through state and local partnerships that use evidence-based best practices, but on addressing the stigma that is all too often associated with seeking help. Learn more [here](#).

[Hope Florida - A Pathway to Prosperity](#) utilizes 'Care Navigators' to guide Floridians on an individualized path to prosperity by focusing on community collaboration between the private sector, faith-based community, nonprofits and government entities to break down traditional community silos, in an effort to maximize resources and uncover opportunities. 'Care Navigators' can help individuals identify their unique and immediate barriers to prosperity, develop long term-goals, and map out a strategic plan including finding support for those contending with substance use disorders. Learn more [here](#).

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About the Florida Department of Health

The Department, nationally accredited by the [Public Health Accreditation Board](#), works to protect, promote, and improve the health of all people in Florida through integrated state, county, and community efforts.

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