

Delaware Division of Public Health Announces Availability of Free Mail-Order Naloxone

DOVER, DE (DEC. 11, 2020) – The Delaware Department of Health and Social Services' (DHSS) Division of Public Health (DPH) announced Friday that Delawareans struggling with addiction can now order free naloxone by mail. Increasing access to naloxone is critical to preventing overdose deaths as more people are struggling with anxiety, depression, and financial stress stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic. Receiving in-person support and treatment is more challenging due to social distancing, which prevents meeting at in-person support groups.

Mail-order naloxone is available through a Memorandum of Understanding between DHSS and the New York-based harm-reduction nonprofit NEXT Distro. NEXT Distro operates in 35 states and has distributed free naloxone to 16,000 households in the United States since 2018. The life-saving medication, also known by its brand name Narcan, can reverse opioid drug overdoses by restoring someone's breathing that has become suppressed from an overdose.

"DPH's agreement with NEXT Distro could not come at a better time," said DPH Director Dr. Karyl Rattay. "Delaware is experiencing a simultaneous increase in COVID-19 cases and drug overdose deaths. Those who need naloxone the most can now order it privately and conveniently, avoiding any stigma that could be a barrier to accessing the life-saving medication. Holding outside distribution events is also becoming more challenging because of the cold weather, making this an ideal option to get naloxone in the hands of those who need it the most."

A total of 316 suspected overdose deaths have occurred through early December this year in Delaware, which is higher than the number of suspected overdose deaths for the same period in 2019, according to preliminary data from the Delaware Division of Forensic Science (DFS). Since overdose deaths typically spike in December, that number is expected to grow. In 2019, 431 people died from drug overdoses in Delaware, according to DFS.

“We know that the COVID-19 pandemic is difficult for all of us mentally and emotionally, but none more so than Delawareans struggling with addiction, mental illness or both,” said DHSS Secretary Molly Magarik. “Because the holidays can add to that existing stress level and may be a trigger point for people with substance use disorder, this new initiative is coming at a particularly critical time. Families in our state can best help their struggling loved ones by ordering naloxone and connecting them to treatment.”

According to the Delaware Overdose Fatality Commission 2018 Annual Report, 79 percent of the overdoses studied occurred in a residence, and naloxone was not available 93 percent of the time. Through a statewide campaign that launches in January, DPH’s Office of Health Crisis Response (OHCR) reminds people that with Narcan they have “The Power to Save a Life.” The campaign encourages Delawareans to save lives by having Narcan available and to download the free OpiRescue DE app on their Apple or Android smartphones for step-by-step instructions on its use. Delawareans will soon see and hear ads on the radio, in bus shelters, on social media, and on gaming apps.

“As the COVID-19 pandemic rages on, so does the opioid epidemic,” said Lt. Governor Bethany Hall-Long. “Putting naloxone directly into the hands of Delawareans is another tool for families, friends and employers to help those who are battling substance use disorder. Delivering it to their front door will save lives. No question. Thank you to the partners who are making this happen.”

Delawareans who want to place a mail order for naloxone should visit the “Overdose Prevention” page on HelpIsHereDE.com and access NEXT Distro’s Delaware program. Customers must watch a video, take a short quiz, and complete a request form. DPH will receive the request from NEXT Distro’s virtual platform and will mail individuals free naloxone. People will receive their naloxone within a few days. All contact information will be kept confidential.

Delawareans can still obtain Narcan or naloxone without a prescription at pharmacies, and Narcan at overdose prevention trainings and naloxone distribution events. Since January 2020, community partners hosted 80 such events, 62 of which were held car-side after COVID-19 emerged as a health crisis in the spring. During the first three quarters of 2020, OHCR’s Community-based Naloxone Access program distributed 6,263 naloxone kits through its community partners, including Community Response Teams in each county.

For more information about mail-order naloxone, Narcan, OpiRescue DE, or virtual resources designed to help those struggling with addiction, visit HelpIsHereDE.com.

The website offers information on virtual support groups, a searchable real-time database on treatment options and availability, and free counseling via the 24/7 Delaware Hope Line. HelpIsHereDe.com also provides directions for the disposal of unused prescriptions and a list of 28 prescription drop boxes available throughout the state. Visitors can also find prevention information including Narcan and the OpiRescue DE app. A HelpisHereDE.com awareness campaign began this month and will run throughout the year on billboards, radio, and social media; in bus shelters; and at 39 grocery stores and pharmacies statewide.

During addiction or mental health emergencies, call DHSS’ 24/7 Delaware Hope Line at 1-833-9-HOPEDE. For an in-depth study of overdose deaths in Delaware for 2017, read DPH’s [Drug Overdose](#)

Mortality Surveillance Report.

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A person who is deaf, hard-of-hearing, deaf-blind or speech-disabled can call the DPH phone number above by using TTY services. Dial 7-1-1 or 800-232-5460 to type your conversation to a relay operator, who reads your conversation to a hearing person at DPH. The relay operator types the hearing person's spoken words back to the TTY user. To learn more about TTY availability in Delaware, visit <http://delawarerelay.com>.

Delaware's Department of Health and Social Services is committed to improving the quality of the lives of Delaware's citizens by promoting health and well-being, fostering self-sufficiency, and protecting vulnerable populations. DPH, a division of DHSS, urges Delawareans to make healthier choices with the 5-2-1 Almost None campaign: eat 5 or more fruits and vegetables each day, have no more than 2 hours of recreational screen time each day (includes TV, computer, gaming), get 1 or more hours of physical activity each day, drink almost no sugary beverages.