

Should your District have NARCAN® Available?

Many districts are inquiring about the use of NARCAN® in schools. Recently, the Missouri Department of Elementary and Secondary Education provided information about NARCAN® and a link to obtain a free nasal spray version of the drug. The purpose of this article is to provide districts with information about NARCAN® to use when determining whether to stock the drug.

What is NARCAN®?

Naloxone hydrochloride (naloxone), also known by the brand name NARCAN®, is an opioid antagonist used for the emergency treatment of a known or suspected opioid overdose. Naloxone is not a new drug; it has been used by medical professionals for over 40 years. It can be administered through muscular injection or a nasal spray. Opioids are opium-based drugs, both legal and illegal, and include morphine, methadone, Buprenorphine, hydrocodone, oxycodone, heroin and fentanyl, a particularly dangerous drug. There are generic forms of NARCAN®.

What is the law?

Missouri law allows for the distribution of Naloxone without prescription.

Pursuant to section 195.206, RSMo.,

- Any licensed pharmacist may sell and dispense naloxone.
- It is permissible for any person to possess naloxone.
- Any person who administers naloxone to another person who the person believes is suffering from an opioid overdose, who acts with good faith and reasonable care, and who contacts emergency personnel immediately after administering the drug, is immune from criminal prosecution and civil liability and is not subject to disciplinary action from his or her professional licensing board based on the administration of the drug.

Pursuant to section 338.205, RSMo., any person or organization acting under a standing order from a health care professional licensed to prescribe naloxone may store naloxone without being subject to the usual licensing requirements and may dispense the drug as long as the person or organization collects no fee.

It is not clear whether these statutes were intended to apply to school districts. Neither “person” nor “organization” are further defined or explained and, in the past, other emergency medications such as epinephrine were specifically authorized by statute for use in schools. However, epinephrine is a prescription medication, and naloxone is available without a prescription.

How can a school district obtain naloxone?

The Missouri State Board of Pharmacy has announced that any pharmacy in the state may dispense naloxone without a prescription. CVS, Walgreens and Hyvee have announced they will sell naloxone without a prescription. In addition, it may be purchased online. Prices vary, but the nasal spray version

of the drug is usually available for around \$120 per dose. There may be fewer vendors that sell the nasal spray version of the drug since the medical professionals who have been using this drug for years likely used the less expensive injectable version. The shelf life for naloxone is 18-24 months.

How does naloxone work and what are the side effects?

Naloxone partially or completely reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. An opioid overdose patient who receives the drug will experience symptoms similar to withdrawal (chills, fever, body aches, diarrhea, etc.) as the drug blocks the opioid's effect. Sometimes withdrawal symptoms can be very painful, but those are outweighed by the drug's life-saving benefits. Naloxone does not produce a high. Naloxone only works if opiates are present, so there is little risk if the drug is administered to someone who is not using opioids. Further, naloxone is specific to opioids; it will not counteract the effect of overdose involving other drugs.

How many doses of naloxone should the district stock?

This is completely up to the district. As with any emergency drug, the number of doses that will be needed is difficult to predict. While there is a significant amount of data about opioid use and overdose in Missouri, MSBA did not find any data specific to schools. Since emergency response personnel usually carry naloxone, a district might factor in response time when determining how many doses to stock in each building. If a district has access to local statistics about opioid use levels, this should be considered as well. The local health department may have such information.

Who should administer naloxone?

Again, this is up to the district. Assuming the statutory provisions cited above apply to schools, anyone administering the drug in accordance with the instructions is protected criminally, civilly and professionally. The district's school nurse or district health staff would be the obvious choice to administer the drug. However, some districts do not have a full-time nurse in every building. As with the administration of other medications, other employees can be trained to identify the symptoms of an overdose and administer naloxone. Because Missouri law on the administration of naloxone is not specific to schools, MSBA recommends that each district consult their local attorney and liability insurance carrier prior to designating lay personnel to administer naloxone.

Do we need to change our policy to allow for the administration of naloxone?

Currently, MSBA's model policy on administration of medications to students, JHCD, only authorizes the emergency use of epinephrine and asthma-related rescue medications. It does not specifically authorize the use of naloxone as an emergency medication. Because naloxone is not a prescription drug and does no harm if administered to someone who is not in opioid crisis, and because current state law provides broad liability protections, stocking naloxone without changing policy has little risk of exposing the district to liability. However, until the state legislature specifically addresses the use of naloxone in schools, MSBA recommends that a district that chooses to stock naloxone for emergency use should modify the emergency medications section of policy JHCD accordingly. Medical emergencies involving staff and visitors to district property are addressed in policy EBBA, Illness and Injury Response and Prevention, and procedure EBBA-AP1, First Aid Guidelines. If a district chooses to make naloxone available for emergency use for staff members or members of the public, EBBA and EBBA-AP1 should also be modified accordingly.