

Portland Public Schools
Naloxone Use in the School Setting
Information for Parents

Opioid overdoses (OPR) have become epidemic. OPR overdose kills thousands of Americans every year. Many of these deaths are preventable through the timely provision of an inexpensive, safe, and effective drug and the summoning of emergency responders. In Connecticut, on average, one person dies every day from an opioid overdose. Opioids include street drugs, like heroin, and prescription drugs like OxyContin. People do overdose and die from prescription drugs by using too much or mixing them with other pills, street drugs, or alcohol.

In 2010, the CDC stated about 12 million Americans (age 12 or older) reported nonmedical use of prescription painkillers in the past year. The 2013 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS) stated almost one in four teens (23 percent) reported abusing or misusing a prescription drug at least once in his or her lifetime, and one in six (16 percent) reported doing so within the past year. A survey conducted in Rhode Island last year indicated that 81 school nurses who had participated in a naloxone training program found that 43 percent of high school nurses responded that students in their schools were abusing opioids.

According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) National Survey on Drug Use and Health in 2013, there were 2.2 million adolescents, ages 12 to 17, who were current illicit drug users. Given the magnitude of the problem, in 2014 the CDC added OPR overdose prevention to its list of top five public health challenges.

Although drug overdoses in the school setting are rare, some school nurses are increasingly thinking of the drug Naloxone as an essential part of their first-aid kits. Administered via syringe or a nasal spray, it works almost immediately to get an overdose patient breathing again, and it does not create a "high" or have major side effects. The secondary schools in our district have Naloxone and all nurses in the district are trained annually on its administration.

Naloxone, also known by the brand name Narcan, is the antidote that reverses an opioid overdose. It has been used in ambulances and hospitals for decades to reverse overdose. It's legal and has been approved by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA). It works by neutralizing the opioids in a person's system and helping the individual to breathe again. It only works if a person has opioids in their system. It doesn't work on other drugs.

Prior to administration of Naloxone the Nurse would assess the individual. Signs that may indicate an opioid overdose would include: diminished level of consciousness, pinpoint pupils, slow heartbeat, slow or absent breathing, shallow or ineffective breathing, decreased muscle tone, blue around mouth or extremities, pale or "clammy" skin. Laws are present to protect those that administer Naloxone if an overdose is expected. Other laws protect individuals from prosecution if they report a suspected overdose and communicate with health providers.