



NEWS RELEASE

ALABAMA DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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New law expands access to naloxone to help prevent opioid overdoses

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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A newly enacted law expands access to naloxone, a drug that can reverse some opioid overdoses in certain emergency situations. The law authorizes State Health Officer Dr. Tom Miller to sign a standing order to allow Alabama's pharmacists to dispense the medication to people in a position to assist others at risk of an overdose as well as to an individual at risk of experiencing an opiate-related overdose.

"This action will help prevent deaths from opioid overdoses," Miller said. "It will be easier for family members, friends or other individuals such as law enforcement and rescue personnel to obtain naloxone to assist people at risk of experiencing an opioid-related overdose."

Mark Jackson, executive director of the Medical Association of the State of Alabama, agreed that expanding access to the medication would put a powerful lifesaving tool in the hands of first responders and save time when lives could be at stake.

"The Association applauds the members of the Legislature and Gov. Bentley for recognizing the importance of significantly expanding access to naloxone," Jackson said. "This new law will not only save lives but also help curb drug abuse and heroin deaths in our state."

For the state's first responders, this life-saving tool could mean the difference between life and death, according to Alabama Association of Rescue Squads President Matthew C. Knight.

"This legislative act will give access to a vital lifesaving drug in our first responders' hands to use in times where distances to an ER could mean a matter of life or death," Knight said. "Our rescue squads, fire departments and law enforcement applaud the Governor and Legislative Body for giving us this resource to use in our rural areas of the state that we serve for our families, friends and citizens of Alabama."

Naloxone has been proven to save lives. It may be used for the reversal of some opioid overdoses, whether from legally prescribed opioids or from illegal substances such as heroin or illegally produced fentanyl. Naloxone may be administered through injection or by nasal spray allowing the person suffering from an overdose to regain consciousness and breathe normally. Unlimited refills are authorized by the new law.

Naloxone poses no danger to individuals who come into contact with it, and it has no potential for abuse. It is effective only if a person has opioids in his or her system; the medication has no effect if opioids are absent.

The standing order was issued pursuant to Alabama Act 2016-307.

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