

# Grays Harbor Overdose Prevention Project

## FAQs



The Grays Harbor Overdose Prevention Project, funded by the Washington State Project to Prevent Prescription Drug/Opioid Overdose (WA-PDO) is part of [Grays Harbor County Public Health and Social Services Department's](#) comprehensive approach to reducing drug use in our community. For information about our effort to prevent youth substance use, visit our [MyTown Coalition page](#). The [Grays Harbor Overdose Prevention Project](#) has two objectives:

1. Distribute naloxone to those at risk of an opioid overdose.
2. Develop a comprehensive overdose prevention strategy and naloxone distribution plan.

Grays Harbor County Public Health and Social Services is excited about this opportunity to save lives and would be happy to answer any additional questions you may have. Please contact Dan Homchick at [dhomchick@co.grays-harbor.wa.us](mailto:dhomchick@co.grays-harbor.wa.us) or (360) 500-4066.

### **Why was Grays Harbor County selected as an Overdose Prevention Project site?**

We know that opioid use and overdose is a problem in Grays Harbor County.

- Our [syringe services program](#), which began in 2004, exchanged 759,818 needles in 2016. Grays Harbor County has a higher rate of [opioid-related deaths](#) than Washington State as a whole. (Source: *Washington State Department of Health Center for Health Statistics*)

The Grays Harbor Overdose Prevention Project will get people who use opioids into treatment and prevent opioid-related deaths.

### **Where does funding for the Grays Harbor Overdose Prevention Project come from?**

Funding for this 5-year project comes from the [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration](#) (SAMHSA) – a federal funding source. The grant is administered by Washington State Department of Social and Health Services' (DSHS) [Division of Behavioral Health Recovery](#) (DBHR) in partnership with the [University of Washington's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute](#) to implement local grant activities. No county money is associated with this program.

### **Does providing naloxone make people more likely to use drugs?**

There is no evidence that giving people naloxone makes them more likely to use more drugs. It does, however, keep them alive to be able to seek treatment when they are ready. Going through withdrawal is painful and unpleasant. Several research studies have shown that people who use heroin and are trained as overdose responders actually use less heroin over time as they assume new "peer leader" roles in their communities.

## **What are the long-term goals of this grant?**

The end goal of this funding is to get people who use opioids into treatment and, ultimately, recovery. These are real people with real problems and real lives. We know that there is not a one-size-fits-all solution and we will be looking for input in developing local priorities for naloxone distribution and in creating a comprehensive overdose prevention strategy. If you are interested in attending our stakeholder meetings please email Dan Homchick at [dhomchick@co.grays-harbor.wa.us](mailto:dhomchick@co.grays-harbor.wa.us).

## **What is naloxone?**

Naloxone is a prescription medicine that temporarily stops the effect of opioids (heroin, OxyContin, Percocet, dilaudid, fentanyl, methadone, etc.). This helps a person start breathing again and wake up from an opioid overdose. It has no effect on other drugs like cocaine, methamphetamine, alcohol, or benzodiazepines.

## **What is the purpose of naloxone distribution?**

The purpose of this program is to prevent deaths from opioid overdoses. Naloxone is a short-term fix for a complicated problem that can only be addressed if the person is alive.

## **Who can legally possess naloxone?**

Naloxone is a prescription medication. Washington state law ([RCW 69.41.095](#)) allows anyone “at risk for having or witnessing a drug overdose” to obtain naloxone and administer it in an overdose situation. Naloxone is not a scheduled or controlled drug so it is safe for anyone to possess.

## **Can I get in trouble for helping out in an overdose situation?**

In Washington state, anyone trying to help in a medical emergency is generally protected from civil liabilities by [RCW 4.24.300](#). Washington state's [911 Good Samaritan Overdose Law RCW 69.50.315](#) gives additional, specific protections against drug possession charges:

- If you seek medical assistance in a drug-related overdose, you cannot be prosecuted for drug possession.
- The overdose victim is also protected from drug possession charges.
- Anyone in Washington state who might have or witness an opioid overdose is allowed to carry and administer naloxone ([RCW 69.41.095](#))

## **How can I get naloxone for myself?**

Naloxone is currently being distributed through our [syringe services program](#). This will get naloxone into the hands of those who are most at risk and most likely to be the very first responders in an overdose situation.

Your doctor can also write you a prescription that you could have filled at a pharmacy if you or your loved one is at risk of an overdose.

**How can I get naloxone for my agency?**

If your agency is interested in obtaining naloxone, please contact Dan Homchick at [dhomchick@co.grays-harbor.wa.us](mailto:dhomchick@co.grays-harbor.wa.us) or (360) 500-4066.

Please note that this funding is not intended to supplant Emergency Medical Response supplies.

**How will I know how to use naloxone? What training is available?**

A short, 10-minute training will be given to individuals who get naloxone at our [syringe services program](#). Participants are trained to recognize and systematically respond to an overdose. They are also informed about what puts users at risk of overdose and avenues for recovering from addiction.

We can also provide naloxone training in a group setting. If your agency would like training on naloxone administration, please contact Dan Homchick at [dhomchick@grays-harbor.wa.us](mailto:dhomchick@grays-harbor.wa.us) or (360) 500-4066.