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## Lifesaving drug intervention.

Heroin and prescription opioids tend to be readily available, in quantity, and at such a relatively low expense that their use, abuse and lethality have reached unprecedented levels.

These drugs are plentiful everywhere you go, from schools to offices to public events across the country. Individuals who use opioids are often quick to form an addiction. They also are quick to develop tolerances, resulting in the need for escalating doses in order to achieve the same high. Physical dependence on the substance manifests itself in the form of unpleasant withdrawal symptoms that drive one to keep using. Withdrawal symptoms include nausea, vomiting, abdominal pain, cramping, diarrhea, uncontrolled leg and muscle spasms, and cold sweats. Narcotic withdrawals are generally considered not to be life-threatening, but the last several days of withdrawal are quite unpleasant. The draw to use can be so strong that even after a person has gone through withdrawals, the relapse rate is rather high. Addicts are vulnerable at any point in this process. The most devastating effect of these narcotics is that an overdose can cause one to stop breathing and die.

Fortunately, there is a reversal agent for this class of drugs. Naloxone (a.k.a. Narcan) has recently been approved for behind-the-counter sales in many states. It is also often readily available through local or national foundations and pharmaceutical manufacturers<sup>1</sup>. This medication can most certainly be lifesaving. It reverses the effects of the narcotics and can restart one's drive to breathe.

While prevention of overdose, addiction and exposure to these medications is of the utmost importance, it is equally important that we as responsible citizens be prepared to act. Education on narcotics, overdose, withdrawals and availability of Narcan are of vital importance. We encourage you to discuss what options are available to you at your school. Consider teaching staff<sup>2</sup> how to recognize an overdose and, if allowed by state and local law, to use Narcan. Always call 911 during an emergency, especially for an overdose of narcotics. Many of the narcotic agents last significantly longer than the reversal agent, and all require ongoing expert medical assessment.

In addition, the Wisconsin Association of School Boards shared this important information regarding the legal status of the administration of Narcan in schools in Wisconsin:

“Section 118.29(2)(a)2g of the Wisconsin state statutes, was recently amended to allow a school bus driver, district employee, or district volunteer who has been authorized in writing to administer medication to administer an opioid antagonist (e.g., Narcan®) to any student or other person who appears to be undergoing an opioid-related drug overdose under the following conditions:

- a. The bus driver, employee, or volunteer must have received prior DPI-approved training on administering a prescription drug by means other than ingestion as required by section 118.29(6) of the state statutes.
- b. If administering an opioid antagonist that has been prescribed in the name of a person other than the individual to whom the drug will be administered, the bus driver, employee, or volunteer must have the knowledge and training needed to safely administer the drug to an individual undergoing an opioid-related overdose, as provided under section 448.037 and section 441.18 of the state statutes.
- c. As soon as practicable, the school bus driver, employee, or volunteer must report the drug overdose by dialing 911 or, in an area in which 911 is not available, the telephone number for an emergency medical service provider.

School districts may be able to obtain a prescription for the opioid antagonist (e.g., Narcan®) that would be used in these emergency situations from the school’s medical advisor or from another authorized prescriber in accordance with section 441.18 or section 448.037 of the state statutes.”

Your local EMS and law enforcement are fighting this battle too, so please be sure to include them in the discussion early and often. Together you can have an impact and save a life.

For additional information you may visit our website or contact your Gallagher advisor.

[ajg.com/publicsector](http://ajg.com/publicsector)

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<sup>1</sup>Adapt Pharma Expands Free NARCAN® Nasal Spray Program to U.S. Colleges and Universities, April 10, 2017  
<https://www.emergentbiosolutions.com/news/adapt-pharma-expands-free-narcan-nasal-spray-program-us-colleges-and-universities>

<sup>2</sup>At a minimum, consideration should be given to including Narcan in the response kits for all first responders.

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