



Behavioral Health System for Future Generations Commission



Recommendation for
Consideration

The Behavioral Health System for Future Generations (BHSFG) Commission proposes the following recommendation for consideration: **Access to Naloxone and Fentanyl Test Strips.**

Problem Statement

The opioid epidemic continues to be a statewide crisis, as overdose deaths continue to increase at alarming rates. Naloxone (sometimes referred to as Narcan), a medication that can reverse opioid overdose, is a critical tool in addressing this issue. Fentanyl test strips that can detect the presence of Fentanyl in all different kinds of drugs (cocaine, methamphetamine, heroin, etc.) and drug forms (pills, powder, and injectables) are also powerful tools to reduce overdose fatalities. Put together, distributing Naloxone and Fentanyl test strips across Montana could provide necessary resources to reduce the number of overdose deaths.

However, there are barriers to accessing and distributing naloxone and Fentanyl test strips including:

1. **Limited access to Naloxone:** Naloxone is not readily available to those who need it most, including individuals who use drugs, as well as their families, friends, and communities.
2. **Stigma:** On going stigma discourages individuals from seeking Naloxone/Fentanyl test strips and carrying those resources with them.
3. **Lack of awareness and training:** Many people are unaware of Naloxone or how to use it effectively in an overdose situation and do not know about the importance of Fentanyl test strips.
4. **Distribution challenges:** Efficient distribution systems are needed to get Naloxone and Fentanyl test strips into community centers, including in community-based organizations, pharmacies, public health departments, and with first responders.

While these low-cost, effective resources can prevent overdose deaths, they are not widespread enough to meet the severity of the problem facing Montana.

Data and Information Sources

According to Montana EMS Data, there were 969 opioid overdose-related 911 responses by ground transporting EMS agencies in 2023, an average of 81 per month. Naloxone was documented in only 392 cases (40.5%). Most individuals who had Naloxone (81%) had improved responses while others had unchanged responses. Naloxone has been remarkably effective when it has been used across Montana.



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Efforts to construct vending machines designed to dispense and distribute Naloxone have shown promising results to reduce overdose fatalities. In Clark County, NV, a pilot Naloxone vending machine program was associated with a 15% reduction in overdose fatalities in its first year. In Hamilton County, OH, a similar pilot program was associated with a 10% decrease in fatal overdoses in the first year of implementation.

Currently, local organizations can request up to 100 units of Naloxone from DPHHS (effective January 1, 2024) each month, but many rural and frontier communities have not utilized this service. In March 2024, 32 out of 56 Montana counties did not utilize this service. This suggests there needs to be more proactive efforts to ensure that all parts of Montana can access Naloxone.

To ensure proper implementation, a pilot program that builds Naloxone and Fentanyl test strip vending machines needs to include detailed instructions on how to administer these tools. Additionally, master trainers need to be available to provide training and technical assistance at each site.

Currently, DPHHS does not provide Fentanyl test strips to community providers who can then distribute them to people in need. This provides a unique opportunity for DPHHS to intervene in a way that can reduce overdose deaths.

Recommendation

Provide one-time funding to DPHHS to purchase up to 24 Naloxone and Fentanyl test strip vending machines to make available to a subset of current contractors for placement within approved settings. Identified contractors will submit an application to the department to implement a vending machine within the community they serve.

Eligible contractors will include:

- 6 PATH programs (Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness).
- 8 Community-Based Drop-in Centers (DICs) where individuals can receive ongoing support and skill enhancement.
- 10 new DICs which are currently in the procurement process.

Addressing the Naloxone and Fentanyl test strips distribution problem requires a multi-faceted approach that includes expanding access, reducing costs by implementing alternative strategies within communities, and increasing awareness and education. The Commission can increase access to Naloxone and Fentanyl test strips and save lives in the fight against the opioid epidemic in Montana.



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Place in Continuum <small>(Projected Jan. 2024)</small>	BHSFG Priority Alignment	Projected Cost
Prevention Treatment	Capacity of adult behavioral health service delivery system	Up to \$400,000

Impact	
Outcomes and Outputs	Implementation Activities and Milestones
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increased access to Naloxone and Fentanyl test strips. 2. Reduction of death by Opioid overdose. 3. Reduction of Fentanyl-related overdose. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Develop grant application. 2. Conduct outreach to potential providers to build interest in the grant. 3. Review applications and select awardees. 4. Purchase vending machines and distribute to 24 grant awardees. 5. Monitor progress and evaluate outcomes. 6. A combination of SOR and SUPTRS grants will provide ongoing support.

Supporting Material: <i>Example Program Budget*</i>			
ITEM	QTY	AMOUNT	TOTAL FUNDING REQUEST
Vending Machines (Wellness Kiosks)	24	\$15,000 per vending machine	\$360,000
Administrative costs	N/A	\$40,000	\$40,000
Total costs			\$400,000

**For example purposes only.*

**Cost of vending machines includes stock of products, delivery and installation.*



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*Supporting Material: Example Grant Criteria**

To be eligible to apply for the grant, service providers must have existing contracts to provide either of the following programs:

- PATH (Project for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness)
- Drop-In Centers

Providers must apply by submitting a complete application to a vending machine unit. that will include—but is not limited to—any of the following information:

- Identifying where the provider would implement a vending machine;
- An explanation of their qualifications to build, stock, and maintain a vending machine containing Fentanyl test strips and Naloxone;
- A project timeline;
- A commitment to meeting all DPHHS reporting requirements;
- Sustainability plans after one-time BHSFG funds expire.

*For example, purposes only.

Oversight and Grant Management

The Prevention Bureau of BHDD will oversee the grant management and monitoring of grant deliverables. DPHHS will verify that grantees meet service requirements.

Provider organization will be required to:

- Obtain a location for the vending machine;
- Track inventory within the vending machine;
- Monitor outcomes through administering surveys to members served and other activities;
- Report number of individuals served; and
- Provide data (including reporting related to outcomes and outputs);
- And meet any other additional requirements outlined by DPHHS in the application.