

**NEWS from the North Dakota Department of Human Services
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Stop Overdose: Preventing Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse in the Community

BISMARCK, N.D. - The North Dakota Department of Human Services' Behavioral Health Division, in collaboration with the Reducing Pharmaceutical Narcotics Task Force, today launched "Stop Overdose," a statewide campaign supporting community efforts to address prescription drug and opioid abuse.

Pamela Sagness, director of the department's Behavioral Health Division said, "Prescription opioid and heroin abuse has impacted families across the state and community members are stepping up and taking action."

According to the Centers for Disease Control, overdose deaths in North Dakota have increased from 20 deaths in 2013 to 43 deaths in 2014.

Sagness said communities play a vital role in the prevention of prescription opioid abuse, heroin abuse, and overdoses, and are encouraged to:

- Host a community forum that addresses issues related to prescription drug and opioid abuse.
 - The West Fargo and Grand Forks communities have community forums scheduled in early May. For details on these events, visit www.prevention.nd.gov/rxabuse.
- Expand, initiate and promote community Take Back locations. To see a list of current locations, visit www.ag.nd.gov/pdrugs/takebackprogram.htm.
- Encourage local pharmacists to consider becoming a trained pharmacist able to prescribe naloxone. For more information, visit www.nodakpharmacy.com/naloxone.asp.
- Share resources and information about issues related to prescription drug and opioid abuse and overdose prevention.

"We can make a difference, and bringing community stakeholders together to address this issue is an important first step," said Interim Human Services Chair Rep. Kathy Hogan.

To support community efforts, the campaign is focused on saving lives by sharing information and providing resources for those most impacted by this public health concern, such as family members and friends, prescribers, pharmacists, behavioral health professionals, and first responders. Visit www.prevention.nd.gov/stopoverdose for more information, resources, and campaign materials.

"As a community we need to work together to implement proven efforts to prevent prescription opioid abuse, heroin abuse, and overdose," said task force member Sen. Judy Lee. "The Reducing Pharmaceutical Narcotics Task Force encourages individuals to learn more about the signs of overdose and how to respond in order to save lives."

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Preventing Prescription Drug and Opioid Abuse in the Community – page 2

In the coming weeks, the statewide campaign will address safe disposal methods for unused and unwanted prescription medication, as well as overdose prevention, including who is at highest risk, how to respond if you witness an overdose, and how to access the lifesaving overdose antidote (naloxone), which is sold under the brand names Narcan® and Evzio®. Each week, information on effective prevention and treatment strategies to combat prescription opioid and heroin abuse will be shared.

The Reducing Pharmaceutical Narcotics Task Force is a group of over 40 public and private organizations, including the medical community, law enforcement, treatment providers, educators, policymakers, and other community partners. The Task Force has been meeting quarterly since 2011 and working towards increasing Take-Back Program locations, improving access to the Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, and supporting legislative efforts in passing the Good Samaritan Bill and naloxone rescue kits.

Individuals who may be at risk of overdose or who know someone at risk are encouraged to speak with a physician or local pharmacist about obtaining a naloxone prescription. To learn more about Stop Overdose, visit www.prevention.nd.gov/stopoverdose.

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