Overview of Opioid Overdose Prevention Programs in New York State

**Drug overdose** is a significant problem in New York State. Recent data from New York City indicate that 624 fatalities resulted from accidental overdoses in 2009 with over 70% involving opioids. The good news is that this is a significant decrease since 2006 when an overdose prevention bill took effect. However NYS is experiencing widespread misuse of opioids, particularly among youth and Long Island is estimated to have one overdose death per day. Many of these deaths, as well as the morbidity from non-fatal overdoses, can be prevented.

**A new life-saving law** took effect in 2006, making it legal in New York State for non-medical persons to administer naloxone to another individual to prevent an opioid/heroin overdose from becoming fatal. The New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH) registers eligible agencies and providers to operate an Opioid Overdose Prevention Program and provides the required supplies for free. These programs train individuals how to respond to suspected overdoses including the administration of naloxone, which is provided free as part of the training.

The Harm Reduction Coalition works under contract with the NYSDOH to provide assistance in implementing opioid overdose prevention programs. We can help by training staff, discussing the application for NYSDOH registration, and helping to determine training needs of staff and clients.

**Naloxone** (Narcan) is a prescription medicine that reverses an overdose by blocking heroin or other opioids in the nervous system for 30 to 90 minutes. Naloxone is administered by injection (and in some places intranasally). It is successfully prescribed and distributed to heroin users, their families and friends in 15 states (and Washington DC) including Baltimore, Chicago, New Mexico, Massachusetts, Michigan, California and New York. Hundreds of individuals participating in these programs have safely and successfully reversed overdoses. As of the end of 2010 over 50,000 people in the United States had received naloxone kits and over 10,000 overdose reversals had been reported.

**Registering** as an opioid overdose prevention program is easy and not time-consuming. The application form is simple and prototype policies and procedures can be provided. A training curriculum is available that can be tailored for any agency depending on the particular setting.

**Program Requirements** for a NYSDOH registered opioid overdose prevention program are straightforward and not demanding. Each program must have an opioid overdose program director and an opioid overdose clinical director who are responsible for complying with the program requirements and insuring the quality of the training performed by the agency. The clinical director must be an MD, PA, or NP. Agencies that do not have medical providers on staff may hire someone for this function for a limited number of hours. Naloxone can only be given out by a medical professional, but any competent staff member can do the training on overdose prevention and response. Other program requirements involve record keeping about trainings done, people trained, use of naloxone by trainees, and supply inventory.
Implementation varies among agencies according to their needs and settings (syringe access programs, drug treatment programs, primary care, in-patient hospital units, etc.). Trainings can be tailored to individuals, groups, or classrooms, and may vary in length from 10 - 50 minutes. A 12 minute DVD can be used supplemented by hands on demonstration.

Contact the Harm Reduction Coalition: for more information and assistance in establishing an overdose prevention program:

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Overdose prevention resources

Harm Reduction Coalition
http://www.Harmreduction.org
A variety of resources under “Overdose”

New York State Department of Health
http://www.health.state.ny.us/diseases/aids/harm_reduction/opioidprevention/index.htm
Includes sample curriculum, policy & procedures, a list of registered agencies

New York City Department of Health and Mental Hygiene
The NYCDOH&MH training video is easily seen here:
http://vimeo.com/4495088

New York State Offices of Alcohol and Substance Abuse Services: A CASAC credit may be earned here:
http://www.oasas.state.ny.us/admed/edseries.cfm

Open Society Foundation
Why Overdose Matters for HIV

Continuing Medical Education credit for physicians and others may be earned here:
http://www.ceitraining.org/cme/courses/overdose.cfm

Testimonials
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LAmrVhsBxLw