

Press Release

Naloxone becomes more accessible to Livingston County residents

Livingston County has taken a new step to fight the local opioid epidemic. Livingston County Community Mental Health Authority now has a vending machine providing free naloxone in the lobby of Livingston CMH East County Complex building located at 2280 E. Grand River Ave in Howell.

Naloxone is a medication that temporarily reverses the dangerous effects of an opioid overdose. It allows time for emergency responders to reach a person and provide needed medical care.

In conjunction with the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services, Livingston CMH has provided naloxone kits to first responders, schools, human service agencies and community members for many years. The new vending machine allows easy, anonymous access to the life-saving medication for any community member at no cost.

Over 100,000 Americans are reported to have died due to the opioid epidemic in 2021. That's one person dying by overdose every seven minutes. Often these deaths are due to synthetic opioids like fentanyl which are included in drugs purchased illegally and on the internet. Fentanyl has a very high rate of death and is about 100 times stronger than morphine.

Livingston County data shows 568 opioid poisonings from March 2, 2020 to July 31, 2022. Additionally, there were 90 overdose deaths between January 8, 2020 and June 30, 2022. Average age of death was 44. Fentanyl was the primary drug in 40% of those deaths. This data comes from an Executive Summary Report on Overdose Trends in Livingston County completed by Livingston Health Department and Livingston County Community Mental Health in early 2023.

A naloxone kit comes with two 4-milligram doses of medication that are sprayed into the nose of someone experiencing an overdose. The medication will be absorbed and effective even if the person isn't breathing. Naloxone is safe for anyone to administer and will not hurt the person if they are not actually overdosing, according to the CDC. Each naloxone box contains directions for administering the medication as well as a QR code to view a state training on how administer it.

Signs of an overdose are blue lips/fingernails; infrequent, uneven or no breathing; deep snoring or gurgling noises, unresponsive to pain; clammy skin; and pinpoint pupils. Naloxone can be given every 2-3 minutes to restore breathing. It can reverse opioid overdoses, including fentanyl.

In March 2023, the Food and Drug Administration approved naloxone for over-the-counter purchase to begin in September. Many major pharmacies will have naloxone available on their shelves starting as early as this week for \$44.99 for a two-dose box. This cost can be prohibitive for some residents and the new vending machine will remove financial barriers to accessing the medication.

The free vending machine is available during business hours (8 am to 5 pm on Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday and 8 am to 7 pm on Tuesday) at Livingston County CMH, 2280 E. Grand River, Howell. Naloxone kits are also available free of charge at Stepping Stones Engagement Center, 2020 E. Grand River, Ste. 102, Howell daily after 5 pm and on weekends.

The vending machine has been made possible by a State Opioid Response grant administered through the Community Mental Health Partnership of Southeast Michigan. Naloxone is provided by the Michigan Department of Health and Human Services.

If agencies need multiple naloxone kits, please contact Diane Heinlein at 517-546-4126.