

More than 900 overdoses reversed in 2014

Written by NM Department of Health
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The New Mexico Department of Health announced July 15 that more than 900 opioid overdose reversals were reported in 2014 due to the use of the drug naloxone. That's almost a 29 percent increase in reversals from 2013. The Department of Health has been working with various partners and agencies to increase access and availability of naloxone in New Mexico as part of a multi-pronged approach to reduce overdose deaths in New Mexico.

"Overdose deaths impact just about every family in New Mexico in one way or another. Addiction is a complex public health issue that requires the collaborative efforts of many agencies, stakeholders, and individuals," Department of Health Cabinet Secretary Retta Ward, MPH said. "The Department of Health is involved in a number of collaborative efforts to train law enforcement and family members on how to administer naloxone."

The Department of Health has worked with the Santa Fe Sheriff's Department and District 7 of the New Mexico State Police to train their officers to carry and administer naloxone if they are the first responders to a possible drug overdose.

District 7 includes Taos, Rio Arriba, and parts of Santa Fe and Colfax counties. The Department of Public Safety hopes to expand its training to officers in other districts, and efforts are underway to work with additional police and sheriff's departments to distribute naloxone to their officers.

Here are some other numbers about naloxone efforts in New Mexico in 2014:

- The Department of Health trained and enrolled about 1,700 new people in the use of naloxone kits.

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- The Department of Health distributed 5,874 doses of naloxone in 2014, a 55 percent increase from 2013.
- Pharmacists are now allowed to prescribe naloxone.
- New Mexico pharmacies are beginning to stock naloxone. About 10 percent of pharmacies have dispensed naloxone kits and 166 kits have been dispensed via Medicaid

Even with the success of more than 900 opioid drug reversals in 2014, New Mexico's drug overdose death rate increased last year. In 2014, 536 New Mexico residents died of an overdose – compared to 449 in 2013. That's a 20 percent increase in the death rate from 2013. In 2013, the death rate was 21.8 per 100,000 compared to 26.4 in 2014. The increase comes after two consecutive years of decreases in overdose deaths rates in New Mexico. The drug overdose death rate fell 16 percent from 2011 to 2013.

Overdose deaths often involve more than one type of drug. Prescription opioids accounted for about 51 percent of the drug overdose deaths in 2014.

The Department of Health and the Board of Pharmacy have been ramping up efforts to more closely monitor prescribing in an effort to reduce the risk of addiction. The Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) allows prescribers and pharmacists to check the prescription history of their patients.

Licensing boards require that health care providers who prescribe drugs such as opioids check the PMP for high risk patients. Training is also provided on safe prescribing and PMP use.

The Board of Pharmacy recently made a change requiring pharmacies provide prescribing data to the Prescription Monitoring Program within one day instead of seven days. Any health care provider prescribing an opioid can also prescribe naloxone.

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- In 2014, there were 927,333 PMP reports requested by users, an increase of more than 325,000 requests since 2013.

- In 2014, prescribers checked the records of 56 percent of patients receiving an opioid prescription for three or more months in the PMP, an increase of six percent from 2013.

- In 2014, pharmacists checked the records of 49 percent of patients receiving an opioid prescription for three or more months in the PMP, an increase of five percent from 2013.

“The Department of Health and its partners have been working hard to make policy changes and build infrastructure to help reduce drug overdose deaths. Now we need the help of providers and pharmacists to increase access to naloxone. We also need to ensure prescribers are consistently using the prescription monitoring program,” Ward said.

New Mexico has been recognized as a leader in innovative policies addressing prescription drug overdose by being one of two states that has implemented 10 out of 10 promising policies according to the Trust for America’s Health.

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