

FAQ on Naloxone Standing Order in North Carolina - Update August 2017

Under the Good Samaritan law, laypeople in North Carolina are able to access, carry and administer naloxone which is a medication able to reverse the effects of an opioid/opiate overdose. North Carolina's Good Samaritan law (SB20) provides immunity from civil and criminal liability for people who administer or dispense naloxone. In August 2015, new changes to the Good Samaritan law (SB154) went into effect allowing pharmacists to also dispense naloxone under a standing order. Under the NC Naloxone Standing Order, pharmacists may dispense naloxone to anyone who is at risk for an opioid/opiate overdose or anyone in a position with intent to assist or aid someone who may experience an overdose. The website NaloxoneSaves.org is an excellent resource for additional information regarding the naloxone standing order in North Carolina, and how pharmacies can get involved in the patient risk assessment and dispensing of naloxone.

Q: What is a standing order? A: A standing order is a medical order that authorizes the dispensing of a medication, like naloxone, to any person who meets criteria designated by the prescriber. North Carolina's standing order, signed by the current North Carolina State Health Director, authorizes any pharmacist practicing in the state of North Carolina and licensed by the North Carolina Board of Pharmacy to dispense naloxone to any person who meets certain criteria without the need for a handwritten/faxed prescription. The standing order states that anyone at risk for an opioid/opiate overdose, anyone who may be in a position to assist someone experiencing an overdose, or anyone who requests naloxone (with justification for needing the medication), may receive naloxone.

Q: How does the change in the Good Samaritan law affect pharmacists? A: As of August 2015, pharmacists can dispense naloxone under a standing order according to SB 154, which amended the original Good Samaritan law. With the new law changes in effect, pharmacists are also immune from civil or criminal liability if they dispense naloxone under a standing order. Nothing in the standing order prevents a provider from co-prescribing naloxone to a patient that they deem to be at risk from an opioid overdose.

Q: How does the STOP Act affect the pharmacist dispensing via the Naloxone Standing order? A: The North Carolina General Assembly has passed, and the Governor has signed into law, the Strengthen Opioid Misuse Prevention ("STOP") Act. The STOP Act is an effort to combat the opioid abuse and misuse epidemic. The STOP Act makes changes to the laws governing controlled substance prescribing, controlled substance dispensing, and the North Carolina Controlled Substance Reporting System ("CSRS"). Although the STOP Act includes a new provision that authorizes certain governmental and non-governmental organizations to distribute naloxone, **it does not change existing authority for pharmacists to dispense naloxone, including pursuant to the statewide standing order.** For more information on the statewide standing order and pharmacist participation, see www.naloxonesaves.org and http://www.ncbop.org/faqs/Pharmacist/fq_NaloxoneDispensing.htm

Q: From the question above, what are the governmental agencies newly authorized to distribute naloxone and why was this section added? A: In order to get naloxone into the hands of those who need this intervention, this aspect of the STOP Act allows community distribution of naloxone by organizations that have a standing order to do so. The standing order may be written to "any governmental or nongovernmental organization, including a local health department, a law enforcement agency, or an organization that promotes scientifically proven ways of mitigating health risks associated with substance use disorders and other high-risk behaviors". The standing order may allow the organization, through its "agents," to distribute naloxone to persons at risk for an overdose or to persons in a position to help someone at risk for an overdose. The distributor will be required to include "basic instruction and information on how to administer" naloxone. Further, this bill provides immunity to organizations distributing naloxone pursuant to such a standing order.

Q: I'm interested in dispensing naloxone at my pharmacy. How do I get a standing order for naloxone? A: The NC standing order allows pharmacists to dispense naloxone to patients at risk for overdose. Documentation and record-keeping requirements for naloxone are the same as other prescriptions dispensed out of a pharmacy. The NC Department of Public Health does request, but does not require, that pharmacies dispensing naloxone notify them of your participation by completing a [form](#) located on the NaloxoneSaves.Org website. This information will be used to count/map locations of pharmacies that are providing access to naloxone to people in N.C. under this standing order. It will be publicly shared with those seeking to obtain a prescription for naloxone in order to direct them to your business.

Q: Where can I obtain brochures or handouts on overdose prevention to offer to people in addition to the naloxone? A: These may be found on the DHHS website “Naloxone Saves” - <http://www.naloxonesaves.org/patient-education/>

Q: How do I educate a patient on the risks of overdose and the use of naloxone? A: Pharmacists should provide information on the risks of overdose and the importance of calling 911 in the case of an opioid/opiate overdose. Refer to NaloxoneSaves.Org for resources on overdose prevention and risk factors. Be mindful that overdose is a highly stigmatized health occurrence and that sensitivity and respect are paramount to having a conversation on overdose risk and prevention. Patients who receive naloxone under the standing order of the State Health Director and one or more individuals who live with them should receive specific education regarding the risk factors for overdose, signs of an overdose, overdose response steps, and the use of naloxone. Pharmacists may use the NaloxoneSaves.Org resources or create their own. Part of the education of individuals at risk is to encourage them to share this information with their family and support system so that they will be prepared/able to assist should the situation arise.

Q: How much does naloxone cost? What about billing? A: NC Medicaid, many Medicare Part D plans, and many private insurance companies cover the cost for several naloxone products. The co-pay varies depending on the patient’s insurance coverage. **Please note:** The nasal atomizer device that is required for IMS Health/Amphastar intranasal naloxone is generally not covered and costs \$5 per atomizer. Branded Nasal Narcan retails for about \$140 for a package of 2 doses. Generic naloxone injection 1mg/ml-2ml syringe costs about \$40 per unit (requires nasal atomizer as well). Insurance typically provides the benefit to a patient at risk though not to individuals receiving naloxone only because they are in a position to provide treatment to others.

Additional Resources:

Naloxone Saves.Org <http://www.naloxonesaves.org/>

NC Harm Reduction Coalition <http://www.nchrc.org/programs-and-services/>

NC Board of Pharmacy http://www.ncbop.org/faqs/Pharmacist/fag_NaloxoneDispensing.htm

College of Psychiatric and Neurologic Pharmacists (requires free trial membership to access) <https://cpnp.org/guideline/naloxone>

NC DHHS Opioid Crisis webpage <https://www.ncdhhs.gov/opioids>