



HELP SAVE LIVES IN THE COMMONWEALTH

Massachusetts 911 Good Samaritan Campaign

Preventing Fatal Overdoses in Massachusetts

Several legislative proposals to prevent fatal overdoses were considered before the state legislature from 2008- 2012. **On August 2nd of 2012, 911 Good Samaritan language*** with expanded prescribing and administration of **Naloxone (Narcan®)**, a medication used to reverse a potentially fatal opioid overdose was signed into law.

Summary and Background:

From 2002-2008, **4500** Massachusetts residents died from opioid-related overdoses (e.g. heroin, oxycodone, or fentanyl).¹ *Most of these deaths could have been prevented.* In most cases if 911 is called quickly, the victim will survive, but fear of police involvement and criminal prosecution prevents many people from calling for help. Immediately calling 911 could also help prevent damage to the victim's brain or body that can occur during an overdose. The Massachusetts Department of Public Health is a strong proponent of this measure.

What the law will do:

Protect people from prosecution for possession of controlled substances when calling 911

Save lives and give people who use opioids a chance to get help for their addiction

Increase the likelihood that witnesses will call 911 during an overdose

What the law will not do:

Does not interfere with law enforcement securing the scene at an overdose

Does not prevent prosecution for drug trafficking

Does not prevent prosecution for outstanding warrants

What law will, also, do:

Beyond offering protection from drug possession charges for people who call 911 to seek emergency medical attention during an overdose, legal protection is given to medical professionals who

- Prescribe naloxone (Narcan®), a medication that reverses opiate overdoses
- Possess and/or administer naloxone to someone appearing to have an opiate overdose

Thank You to Campaign Members:

AIDs Action Committee of Massachusetts
Allston Brighton Substance Abuse Task Force
ABH, Association for Behavioral Healthcare
Boston Health Care for the Homeless
Boston Medical Center
The Boston Public Health Commission
Brockton Opioid Overdose Prevention Coalition
Cambridge Health Alliance
Cambridge Prevention Coalition
Dimock Center
Health Imperatives
Healthy Gloucester Collaborative
Health Resources in Action
Impact Quincy
Law Enforcement Against Prohibition

Learn to Cope
Lynn Community Health Center
Massachusetts AIDS Policy Task Force
MOAR, Massachusetts Organization for Addiction Recovery
Northeast Center for Healthy Communities
Revere Cares
State OBOT
Students for Sensible Drug Policy – Northeastern University
Students for Sensible Drug Policy – Boston University
T. Stephen Jones Public Health Consulting
Tapestry Health Systems
Victory Programs
Western Massachusetts Center for Healthy Communities

Thank You to former Senator Steven Tolman, Senate President Murray, Mental Health and Substance Abuse Committee CoChairs, Senator John Keenan and Representative Malia; Senator Cynthia Creem, Senator Jennifer Flanagan, Representative Alice Peisch, Representative James O'Day, and Representative Martin Walsh for asserting leadership to make this law happen!

Thank You to The Massachusetts Department of Public Health. Thank You to the many family members and persons in recovery, who gave real life testimony!

Quick Facts:

- **The 911 Good Samaritan law does not interfere with law enforcement** efforts to assess the scene of an overdose for public safety.
- Studies show over **50%** of persons interviewed reported they **did not call 911 during an overdose due to their fear of police involvement.**^{2, 3, 4}
- **More deaths occur in private settings**, where people are less likely to call 911 due to fear of police involvement. Bystanders are more likely to call for help in overdoses that occur in public settings than in private settings such as homes or hotels and research indicates that the majority of fatal overdoses occur in private settings.³
- In 2008, community assessments were done in Brockton, Cambridge, Charlestown, Fall River, Gloucester, Jamaica Plain/Roxbury, Lowell, Lynn, New Bedford, Revere, Springfield, and Worcester. **Fear of police involvement was the major reason given for not calling 911**; a leading contributing cause of Massachusetts fatal overdoses.
- As part of a DPH overdose prevention project, between November 2007 and September 2012 **almost 16,000 persons were trained to prevent, recognize and respond to an opioid overdose and administer** naloxone (Narcan®). At this time, DPH has documented reversal of **1700 potentially fatal** overdoses.
- In 2008, **the US Conference of Mayors** unanimously urged all state governments to adopt emergency **“Good Samaritan” laws**.
- **Massachusetts now joins Rhode Island, New Mexico, Illinois, Washington State, and New York for enacting a Good Samaritan law.** Positive reports from community and law enforcement members⁶ are being heard. Similar life-saving legislation is pending in other states: Connecticut, New Jersey, Maryland, Hawaii, Oregon, and Nebraska. Next steps include organizing for community awareness!

Overdose Prevention Legislation in other States

State	Date Passed	Bill(s) Passed
New York	April 1, 2006/July 20, 2011	Naloxone Prescription & Administration/911 Good Samaritan
Rhode Island	June 2012	Naloxone Prescription & Administration/ 911 Good Samaritan
Washington State	March 10, 2010	Naloxone Prescription & Administration
Illinois	January 1, 2010/February 6, 2012	Naloxone Prescription & Administration/911 Good Samaritan
California	October 11, 2007	Naloxone Prescription & Administration
New Mexico	June 15, 2007	911 Good Samaritan (2007) and Naloxone Prescription & Administration (2001)
Connecticut	October 1, 2003	Naloxone Prescription & Administration

Footnotes

1. Source: Registry of Vital Records and Statistics(2010), Oxycontin Heroin Commission Report (2009)
2. Darke, S., Ross, J., and Hall, W. (1996). Overdose among heroin users in Sydney, Australia: II. Responses to overdose. *Addiction*, 91(3), 413-417.
3. Davidson, P. J., Ochoa, K. C., Hahn, J. A., Evans, J. L., and Moss, A. R. (2002). Witnessing Heroin-related overdoses: the experiences of young injectors in San Francisco. *Addiction*, 97, 1511-1516.
4. Tracy, M., Markham Piper, T., Ompad, D., Bucciarelli, A., Coffin, P., Vlahov, D., Galea, S. (2005). Circumstances of witnesses drug overdoses in New York City: implications for intervention. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 79 181-190.
5. Pollini, R., McCall, L., Mehta, S., Celentano, D., Vlahov, D., Starthdee, S. (2006). Response to Overdose Among Injection Drug Users. *American Journal of Preventive Medicine*
6. Banta-Green CJ, Kuszler PC, Coffin PO, Schoeppe JA. Washington's 911 Good Samaritan Drug Overdose Law - Initial Evaluation Results. Alcohol & Drug Abuse Institute, University of Washington, November 2011.

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