

Overview of Opioid Overdoses in Vermont

Preliminary data indicate there were 243 accidental or undetermined opioid-related fatalities among Vermont residents in 2022, an increase from previous years. Fentanyl is involved in 93% of these fatalities, while cocaine is involved in 49% and xylazine in 28%.¹ It is critical that Vermonters have access and know how to use naloxone, a medication that reverses the effects of opioids. Naloxone is often known by the brand name Narcan®.

Community Naloxone Distribution

The Health Department's Opioid Overdose Prevention and Reversal Program (OOPRP) collaborates with community-based organizations and first responders to distribute naloxone and train Vermonters on the use of rescue kits. The OOPRP provides training on overdose prevention, overdose response, and opioid misuse prevention. The program provides referrals to harm reduction, recovery, and treatment services across Vermont. The goal of the OOPRP is to distribute naloxone overdose rescue kits to Vermonters at risk of overdose, family members and friends of those at risk, and anyone who may be able to help in the event of an overdose. Fentanyl is being found in many illicit substances so it is important for anyone using any powder or pill, not purchased at a pharmacy, to have naloxone on hand and teach loved ones where it is kept and how to use it. Learn more about [overdose prevention and naloxone distribution](#). Learn where to access naloxone at vthelplink.org.

The OOPRP supports naloxone distribution through three pathways:

- Community Distribution by:
 - **Narcan® Kit** Program and
 - **Harm Reduction Pack** (HRP) Program
- First responder distribution by the **leave behind kit** (LBK) program

This data brief focuses on the community based distribution of naloxone. Read the [quarterly EMS naloxone distribution and administration data brief](#).

KEY POINTS

Between Jan 1 – Sep 30, 2023:

- **The Health Department distributed 53,777 doses of naloxone.**
- **Community naloxone was reported to reverse 146 overdoses.**
- **911 was called for less than half of all reported overdoses (42%).**

¹ [Vermont Department of Health - Opioid-Related Fatal Overdoses Among Vermonters](#)

Community Naloxone Distribution and Administration

Changes to the OOPRP in 2022

To ensure continuous responsiveness to the changing opioid overdose landscape, an extensive quality improvement project was conducted in 2022 advancing data collection and subsequent analyses. The Health Department completed this project in close partnership with key community naloxone distribution organizations (data collection was paused during this time). The new data collection form for the Narcan® Kit program launched in January 2023 and as a result, briefs published thereon contain information not available for prior briefs.

Naloxone Distribution by the Vermont Department of Health

The following table contains data on naloxone-related kits and materials distributed to community partners by the Vermont Department of Health. This includes **Narcan® kits** provided to the OOPRP community naloxone distribution sites, **harm reduction packs** (HRP) given to distribution sites, and **leave behind kits** given to first responder agencies.

Distribution of Naloxone Doses from the Vermont Department of Health – 2023 (Preliminary)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Narcan® kit program: Number of doses distributed to community sites	6,480	9,398	11,031		26,909
Harm reduction packs: Number of doses distributed to HRP sites	6,336	9,310	8,972		24,618
Leave behind kits: Number of doses provided to first responder agencies (2 doses/kit)	528	498	1,224		2,250
Total doses of naloxone distributed by the Vermont Department of Health	13,344	19,206	21,227		53,777

Naloxone Distribution by Community Sites

The following tables contain data collected by the OOPRP community naloxone distribution sites and harm reduction pack distribution sites. These data are updated on a quarterly basis. Historic data may change if reporting was delayed. All data in the following tables should be considered preliminary until the annual data report is published.

Naloxone Distribution to Community – 2023 (Preliminary)					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Narcan® kit program: Number of doses distributed by community sites	1,238	3,235	2,451		6,924
Harm reduction packs: Number doses distributed by HRP sites	6,450	3,812	4,836		15,098
Leave behind kits: Number of doses distributed by first responder agencies (2 doses/kit)	282	242	318		842
Doses of naloxone distributed to community	7,970	6,882	7,653		22,864

Community Naloxone Distribution and Administration

Information Reported by Naloxone Recipients at Community Sites

In the first nine months of 2023, naloxone was given out at community sites during 1,437 client interactions². Clients are asked to answer a few questions to improve naloxone distribution. To minimize barriers to accessing naloxone, answering these questions is optional. One-quarter of clients responded to the distribution questionnaire. Of clients who reported demographic information, 91% identified their race as white alone and 98% identified their ethnicity as non-Hispanic. Naloxone recipient ages range from 12 to 78 years old, with the median age of 39.

Client's Reason for Getting Naloxone					
<i>*The client could choose multiple reasons</i>					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Overall
To replace naloxone I used to have	18%	13%	10%		13%
To have some on hand	19%	24%	15%		20%
I am picking naloxone up for another person	4%	2%	2%		2%
Some other reason	3%	2%	2%		2%
Client's First Time Receiving Naloxone?					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Overall
Yes	20%	19%	23%		21%
No	78%	80%	74%		78%
If not the client's first-time receiving naloxone, what happened to the naloxone the client had before?					
<i>*The client could choose multiple reasons</i>					
It was used	44%	38%	41%		41%
It was given away	38%	19%	15%		23%
It expired	10%	8%	11%		9%
It was lost	6%	0%	*		**
It was confiscated	*	0%	0%		**
Something else	7%	*	*		5%
If not the client's first-time receiving naloxone, where did the client previously get naloxone from?					
<i>*The client could choose multiple locations</i>					
Community organization or clinic like this one	70%	82%	72%		77%
Friend	11%	4%	*		6%
Medical Provider	9%	*	14%		7%
Some other place	11%	7%	9%		8%
Peer Coach	*	0%	0%		*
Pharmacy	*	*	*		3%

² Identifying client information is not collected. These interactions are likely a mix of first-time and return visits.

Community Naloxone Distribution and Administration

Is the client interested in treatment?

**Only asked by organizations that provide referrals to Substance Use Disorder treatment*

Currently in treatment	42%	44%	51%		45%
Yes	5%	*	*		4%
No	40%	43%	34%		39%
Question was not discussed	10%	*	*		5%
Refused/Don't Know	*	6%	11%		6%

Note: The total number of responses for each question varies because each question is optional and may allow multiple responses.

**Fewer than 6 responses, data have been suppressed*

*** Secondary suppression*

Overdose Information Reported by Clients

People receiving naloxone were asked if they wanted to share information about an overdose they witnessed. The following data highlights information about the 146 overdoses reported to community distribution sites by clients from January through September 2023. Historic data may change if reporting was delayed.

Overdose Information Reported by Clients - 2023					
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total
Number of overdoses reported by naloxone kit recipients	36	62	48		146
Number of times 911 was called for a perceived overdose	13	24	24		61
Number of people receiving naloxone in response to a perceived overdose	32	66	36		134
Number of doses used to reverse a perceived overdose	90	210	111		411
Successful overdose reversals reported	30	55	36		121

Of the overdoses reported by clients receiving naloxone during January - September, 2023...



911 was called for **42%** of the overdoses.



90% reported overdose reversal after naloxone administration.

Key Takeaways:

The community distribution sites active January to September 2023 effectively distributed naloxone to community members, with over 22,000 doses distributed during this nine-month period. Of the Vermonters receiving naloxone who consented to answering the data collection form, most had previously received naloxone and were picking up more to replace doses that were used. This indicates that the community sites are reaching people who are well posed to respond to an overdose.

Vermonters receiving naloxone reported 146 overdoses during the nine-months of the year. Most overdoses that were administered naloxone were successfully reversed, but 911 was called for less than half of overdoses reported. As more adulterants (substances added to manipulate the potency and/or production cost of an illicitly sold drug), such as xylazine, enter the drug supply, it is even more critical for those able to respond to an overdose with naloxone to also call 911. The information collected during this period may indicate that Vermonters receiving naloxone are being effectively trained in how to use it, and in the steps to take when responding to an overdose.

For more information on the OOPRP: www.healthvermont.gov/naloxone

For more information on SIREN: www.healthvermont.gov/siren

For more information on overdose prevention strategies: www.knowodvt.com

For more information on harm reduction, treatment, and recovery services: www.vthelplink.org

For questions about this data brief: naloxone@vermont.gov