



Winnebago County
Office of the County Executive

The Wave of the Future

February 20, 2024

Dear County Board Supervisor,

I am writing to request your reconsideration and support for the resolution allowing for increased access to Narcan in our community. As the opioid epidemic continues to devastate lives, families, and the economy nationwide, and here in our county, we must take bold steps to effectively address the deaths resulting from use and overdose. Across County services we see, firsthand, how each death impacts our community, and we are motivated to find creative and new ways to reduce the harm caused. Please join us in this effort to save lives in Winnebago County.

Background: Narcan (Naloxone) is a critical overdose-reversal drug that saves lives. With the recent approval by U.S. regulators to sell Narcan without a prescription, we have a unique opportunity to make this life-saving medication more accessible to those in need. Access to Narcan, in workplaces, apartment complexes, and public spaces can play a pivotal role in harm reduction efforts.

Why Access to Narcan Matters:

1. **Immediate Access:** 24-hour access to Narcan, ensuring that anyone witnessing an opioid overdose can provide timely assistance. Lives are saved within minutes. 24-hour access extends availability to community members who work odd hours, many of whom are unable to get Narcan currently.
2. **Reducing Stigma:** By placing Narcan in public places throughout the community, we reduce the barrier of a stigma associated with seeking help. Individuals can obtain Narcan discreetly, without judgment or embarrassment.
3. **Evidence-Based Impact:**
 - New research from the University of Cincinnati, in partnership with local nonprofit Caracole, demonstrates the effectiveness of self-service locations containing naloxone.
 - [The study](#) showed that these Narcan access locations helped prevent overdoses and significantly contributed to Hamilton County's overdose deaths decreasing in 2021.
 - The study found that the fatal overdoses in Hamilton decreased by 10% while the U.S. increased by 15%.

Data Study: Opioid Overdose Prevention Programs Providing Naloxone to Laypersons — United States, 2014:

- The study found that the availability of Narcan led to a **17% reduction in opioid overdose incidents** in areas where they were deployed from [1996-2014](#).
- Response times, and outcomes, for providing life-saving emergency care improved significantly when a friend, neighbor, or loved one is able to administer Narcan at the first sign of overdose.
- Evidence underscores the urgent need for access to Narcan as part of Winnebago County's harm reduction strategy.

With implementation of this new resource, we could reasonably expect around a 10% decrease in opioid fatalities. That equals roughly four more people, four lives saved and able to seek recovery, each year. To help with the recovery aspect and provide wrap-around resources, Solutions Recovery is able and willing to add an option in their free "We Heart You" mobile app to request the code by contacting a trained peer recovery specialist.

By supporting this resolution, you prioritize the health and recovery of county residents, constituents across all walks of life, and take a crucial step toward combating the opioid epidemic, utilizing grant money that is waiting to be put toward saving lives. Let us act swiftly to improve access and empower our community.

Thank you for your dedication to our community's well-being and thank you for hearing me out on the issue.

Sincerely,

Jon Doemel
Winnebago County Executive

Subject: Access to Narcan as a Tool to Combat Winnebago County's Opioid Epidemic