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Washington receives grant to help prevent opioid overdose and deaths

OLYMPIA- The [Washington State Department of Social and Health Services \(DSHS\)](#), working in partnership with the [University of Washington's Alcohol and Drug Abuse Institute \(ADAI\)](#), has been awarded \$1 million per year, up to five years, from the [U.S. Department of Health and Human Services \(HHS\)](#) to help prevent opioid overdoses and deaths.

The announcement was made by HHS on Aug. 31, which was also National Overdose Awareness Day. Washington was among 12 states to receive this funding to provide overdose prevention and response training and to distribute naloxone in high-need areas. Naloxone is a medication that can block the effects of opioids, including heroin and prescription pain medication, and restore breathing in an overdose.

“We are pleased to be awarded funding to reduce this serious public health problem in Washington,” said Chris Imhoff, Director of the DSHS Division of Behavioral Health and Recovery. “Over the five years of the project, overdose prevention resources will reach over 17,000 first responders, medical professionals, pharmacies and community partners. This will save lives and help connect people with opioid use disorders with critical healthcare and treatment services.”

Washington's grant is part of the federal [Opioid Initiative](#) which focuses on improving opioid prescription practices, increasing the use of naloxone and helping more people access treatment for opioid use disorder.

The partnership between DSHS and UW, known as the Washington State Project to Prevent Prescription Drug/Opioid Overdose, or WA-PDO, will use the grant to engage first responders, pharmacies, health care providers and local and regional community stakeholders to reduce the risk of overdose and death among people who use heroin and prescription opioids.



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WA-PDO will work with syringe exchange programs in Pierce, Skagit, Thurston and Walla Walla counties. Training and naloxone kits will be provided to first responders and to community members who may be at risk for having, or witnessing, an opioid overdose.

In Washington, about 600 people per year die due to opioid overdose. The use of naloxone to reverse an opiate overdose not only saves lives, but can also be a catalyst for many to seek treatment. As part of the effort to help more people achieve and sustain long-term recovery from substance use disorders, Governor Jay Inslee has proclaimed September to be Recovery Month.

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The Behavioral Health Administration provides inpatient and outpatient psychiatric treatment, recovery support along with prevention and intervention programs for people with mental health needs and substance abuse concerns. It operates three state psychiatric hospitals that deliver high-quality services to adults and children with complex needs. BHA's team of 2,804 staff ensures that nearly 150,000 people receive needed services each year on a \$910 million annual budget.