



Promising Practices from Pennsylvania Campuses

The overdose crisis continues to impact communities across Pennsylvania, including college and university campuses. Institutions of higher education are increasingly recognizing their role in overdose prevention by expanding access to naloxone, providing education on overdose recognition and response, reducing stigma associated with substance use disorders, and connecting students with support services.

Across the Commonwealth, colleges and universities are implementing innovative approaches to naloxone distribution, harm reduction, and substance use prevention. In addition to naloxone distribution, many campuses provide evidence-based alcohol and other drug prevention programming, recovery supports, education on overdose prevention, and initiatives that promote healthy decision-making and reduce substance misuse. These initiatives range from naloxone distribution programs and wall-mounted, self-serve naloxone access points to peer-led education efforts, community partnerships, and public awareness campaigns.

This resource highlights naloxone distribution and overdose prevention initiatives implemented by Commonwealth University, Shippensburg University, and Slippery Rock University. While each institution has adopted a unique approach, all three demonstrate how overdose prevention strategies can be successfully integrated into campus wellness, student affairs, public safety, and health promotion efforts.

WHY COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES MATTER

Young adults face increasing risk from an illicit drug supply that may contain fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. Students may encounter overdose emergencies involving friends, roommates, classmates, family members, or members of the surrounding community. As a result, colleges and universities are uniquely positioned to increase access to lifesaving resources and equip campus communities to respond effectively during an emergency.

Campus naloxone initiatives can:

- Increase access to lifesaving overdose reversal medication
- Reduce barriers and stigma associated with carrying naloxone
- Equip students, faculty, and staff to respond to emergencies
- Strengthen connections between students and support services
- Promote a public health approach to substance use prevention and response
- Foster a culture of care, safety, and shared responsibility

Many institutions are incorporating naloxone into their emergency preparedness infrastructure, similar to Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) and other lifesaving resources, by making it readily available in residence halls, academic buildings, athletic facilities, and other public spaces.



ABOUT NALOXONE

Naloxone is a safe, effective, FDA-approved medication that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose by blocking the effects of opioids and helping restore breathing. Naloxone is available in several formulations, including intranasal nasal spray and intramuscular injection. NARCAN® is the brand name for 4 mg naloxone nasal spray. Each box contains 2 individually sealed, single-dose nasal spray devices.

Naloxone is easy to use and can be administered by non-medical bystanders. If naloxone is given to someone who is not experiencing an opioid overdose, it will not harm them. **When an opioid overdose is suspected, administering naloxone promptly can save a life.**

The goal of naloxone administration is to restore breathing, not to wake the person. Today's drug supply may contain non-opioid sedatives, such as xylazine or medetomidine. Naloxone does not reverse the effects of these sedatives; however, these sedatives are commonly found alongside fentanyl or other opioids, which naloxone does reverse. As a result, a person may remain

unconscious or heavily sedated even after naloxone has reversed the opioid effects. Responders should focus on breathing and continue to monitor the person.

Naloxone is an emergency intervention, not a substitute for medical care. Calling 911 is strongly recommended, because naloxone can wear off and breathing may slow again. Stay with the person, monitor their breathing, provide rescue breaths when needed, and place them in the recovery position once they are breathing on their own.

Like epinephrine for severe allergic reactions or an AED for cardiac emergencies, naloxone is a lifesaving tool. When administered promptly and followed by emergency medical care, it can help save a life during an opioid overdose.



Courtesy of Emergent



Courtesy of Emergent



CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT: COMMONWEALTH UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA

Commonwealth University has developed a comprehensive distribution program focused on increasing student access to naloxone by reducing barriers associated with obtaining and carrying this lifesaving product. Since 2022, Student Health Services has coordinated naloxone distribution efforts across Commonwealth University Bloomsburg, Lock Haven, and Mansfield campuses in partnership with Student Well-Being and Health Promotion, which provides campus-wide health education and wellness initiatives; the Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Prevention and Intervention Program, which delivers education, prevention, and recovery support related to substance use; Residence Life; and community partners. Together, these partners work to reduce barriers to obtaining and carrying naloxone while expanding overdose prevention education throughout the university community.

Program Origins

The program was established following the tragic loss of [E. Morgan Heckler](#), a rising senior at the Bloomsburg campus, who died from accidental fentanyl poisoning in August 2022. In response, Student Health Services launched a naloxone distribution initiative designed to increase access to overdose prevention resources and reduce the impact of the overdose crisis on the university community. Initially implemented at the Bloomsburg campus, the program expanded in 2023 to include the Lock Haven, Mansfield, Clearfield, and Sayre campuses.



Self-Service Naloxone Distribution Boxes

Commonwealth University has adopted a layered approach to naloxone distribution. Early efforts focused on providing naloxone through campus health centers and designated public pickup locations. In spring 2025, the university expanded the program by installing self-service naloxone distribution boxes in residence halls across campuses. Each distribution box includes educational materials and a QR code linking students directly to [overdose response and naloxone administration information](#).



Innovative Practice: Welcome Week Naloxone Distribution



In fall 2025, Commonwealth University piloted an innovative naloxone keychain-holder initiative targeting incoming first-year students. Students attending mandatory Welcome Week were offered a free, discreet keychain holder containing naloxone and educational materials on overdose recognition, naloxone administration, and Pennsylvania's Medical Amnesty Law.

Approximately 1,000 naloxone holders were distributed during the first week of the semester in 2025.

Harm Reduction Event

Also during fall 2025, Commonwealth University hosted the "Reducing Harm is Your Lucky Charm" harm-reduction event for student-athletes and fraternity and sorority members on the Bloomsburg campus. The event featured a presentation by the E. Morgan Heckler Foundation on accidental fentanyl poisoning and an overview of Pennsylvania's Medical Amnesty Law presented by the Director of University Police.

Program Evaluation Findings

To better understand students' attitudes toward carrying naloxone, Commonwealth University surveyed 207 participants before they received a naloxone holder at the harm-reduction event. This survey was conducted separately from the Welcome Week first-year distribution initiative. Findings revealed that while **93% of respondents did not regularly carry naloxone, many cited lack of access rather than lack of interest.** Notably:

- 67% reported not carrying naloxone because they did not have it in their possession;
- 73% indicated they would carry naloxone if provided a free and discreet holder;
- 70% believed other students would be more likely to carry naloxone if provided a discreet holder; and
- 59% reported that the appearance of the holder would influence their decision to carry naloxone.

Key Lessons Learned

Commonwealth University's experience demonstrates that reducing practical barriers to access can significantly increase student willingness to carry naloxone. By combining broad distribution strategies, residence hall access, peer-to-peer education, and discreet carrying options, institutions can normalize naloxone possession and expand overdose prevention efforts across campus communities.



CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT: SHIPPENSBURG UNIVERSITY

Shippensburg University has emerged as a leader in overdose prevention through its innovative approach to naloxone distribution, peer education, and community partnership. In 2026, the university became the first Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education institution to serve as an [Overdose Prevention Program](#) partner through the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs (DDAP), creating a direct pathway for students and community members to access free naloxone and overdose prevention resources.



Through its [Connection Alcohol and Other Drugs \(AOD\) Program](#), Shippensburg University integrates overdose prevention into a broader framework of education, recovery support, intervention services, and student wellness. The program has served students for more than four decades and works collaboratively with university leadership, graduate assistants, peer educators, county drug and alcohol agencies, and community organizations to reduce barriers to support and increase access to lifesaving resources.

Innovative Practice: Campus and Community Distribution Network

As an Overdose Prevention Partner, Shippensburg University operates a distribution model that extends beyond campus boundaries. Naloxone is available through a network of distribution sites located in residence halls, academic buildings, and community locations, ensuring that both students and local residents have access to overdose prevention resources when and where they are needed.

Shippensburg University has developed a comprehensive naloxone distribution model that combines on-campus emergency access with community-based distribution partnerships. The university utilizes publicly accessible [distribution boxes and Naloxone ONEboxes](#) to make naloxone readily available while reducing barriers associated with requesting supplies.

ONEbox

Through funding from an opioid settlement grant administered by [Franklin-Fulton Drug & Alcohol](#), the university installed [ONEbox](#) emergency opioid overdose response boxes in residential and academic buildings across campus. These publicly accessible emergency stations are designed to provide immediate access to overdose response resources and contain naloxone, protective gloves, a rescue breathing mask, and an embedded video screen that provides step-by-step instructions for administering naloxone during an opioid overdose emergency.





Community Naloxone Distribution Boxes

The Connection AOD Program partners with local organizations throughout the Shippensburg community to establish naloxone access points using newspaper-style distribution boxes. These boxes provide free naloxone to students, residents, and visitors without requiring an appointment or interaction with staff. Distribution locations include both on-campus and community-based settings, helping to create a broader overdose prevention network throughout the region.



Student-Led Harm Reduction

A defining feature of the program is the active involvement of graduate students and peer educators. Students assist with naloxone distribution, provide overdose prevention education, and engage their peers in conversations about substance use, recovery, and harm reduction. Program leaders report that peer-to-peer engagement helps create a more supportive environment where students feel comfortable asking questions and seeking help without fear of judgment or punishment.

Results

- First Pennsylvania State System of Higher Education institution to become an Overdose Prevention Partner, serving as the primary point of distribution for their county.
- More than 1,500 doses of naloxone distributed through campus and community locations.
- Eight active naloxone distribution sites, including residential, academic, and community locations.
- Strong partnerships with local drug and alcohol agencies, community organizations, and recovery-support providers.

Overcoming Challenges

Program leaders noted that one of the initial challenges was addressing misconceptions about harm reduction and overdose prevention. Through education, open dialogue, and collaboration with community partners, the university has worked to increase understanding of the role naloxone plays in saving lives and supporting student well-being.

Key Lesson Learned

Shippensburg University's experience demonstrates that overdose prevention efforts are most effective when students are actively involved in both planning and implementation. By empowering students as educators and ambassadors, institutions can foster trust, reduce stigma, and create a culture where seeking help and carrying naloxone are viewed as acts of care and community responsibility.



CAMPUS SPOTLIGHT: SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY

Slippery Rock University has established a comprehensive campus overdose prevention initiative that integrates naloxone access, peer education, and harm reduction programming into its broader wellness and student support framework. Led by the Office of Wellness Education within the Dean of Students Office, the initiative combines public health education, student engagement, and environmental prevention strategies to create a campus culture focused on safety, wellness, and overdose prevention.

The program is supported by a multidisciplinary team that includes professional staff, graduate assistants, and undergraduate Wellness Peer Educators who work collaboratively to provide training, outreach, and naloxone distribution throughout the university community.

Innovative Practice: Campus Naloxone Stations

In 2023, Slippery Rock University launched one of the most comprehensive [campus naloxone access initiatives](#) in Pennsylvania by installing naloxone stations adjacent to AEDs throughout campus. The university currently maintains over 20 [Narcan stations](#) installed across campus.

Each station contains naloxone kits equipped with overdose response instructions, safety gloves, and educational materials. By locating naloxone alongside AEDs and other emergency response equipment, the university intentionally framed overdose response as a routine component of campus safety and emergency preparedness. Wellness Peer Educators monitor and restock stations on a regular basis to ensure continued availability.



Innovative Practice: “Narcan Saves Lives” Awareness Campaign



To support the launch of the naloxone stations, Slippery Rock University developed the "Narcan Saves Lives" awareness campaign, a campus-wide educational initiative designed to increase understanding of overdose prevention and reduce stigma surrounding naloxone use. The university partnered with local treatment providers, Prevention Point Pittsburgh, Butler County Alcohol and Other Drugs Programs, student organizations, fraternity and sorority life, and athletics programs to promote the initiative and engage students in overdose prevention education.



Education and Training

In addition to naloxone distribution, Slippery Rock University provides ongoing overdose prevention and harm reduction education for students, faculty, and staff. Training sessions address topics such as drug adulteration and fentanyl contamination, substance use disorders, harm reduction strategies, overdose recognition, and naloxone administration. These trainings create opportunities for participants to ask questions, discuss misconceptions, and build confidence in responding to an overdose emergency.

Results

- 26 Narcan stations located in residence halls, athletic facilities, the campus police station, academic support buildings, and other non-classroom buildings.
- Ongoing peer-led station maintenance and outreach efforts.
- Campus-wide awareness campaign launched through the "Narcan Saves Lives" initiative.
- Regular overdose prevention and harm reduction training opportunities for students and employees.

Overcoming Challenges

University leaders reported that the initial rollout of naloxone stations was met with questions and concerns from some members of the campus community who worried that naloxone availability could encourage substance use or signal an increase in drug activity on campus. Through sustained education, collaboration with campus and community partners, and peer-led outreach efforts, the university successfully addressed these misconceptions and built broad support for the initiative. Today, naloxone access is viewed as a normal and accepted component of campus health and safety.

Key Lesson Learned

Slippery Rock University's experience demonstrates the importance of integrating naloxone access into existing campus safety systems and engaging students as active partners in implementation. By combining visible naloxone access points with ongoing education and peer leadership, institutions can normalize overdose prevention and create a more informed, prepared, and supportive campus community.



LESSONS LEARNED FROM PENNSYLVANIA CAMPUSES

Although each institution highlighted in this resource adopted a unique approach to naloxone distribution and overdose prevention, several common themes emerged across successful programs.

- Foster leadership by inviting students to serve as partners and ambassadors.
- Build support across student affairs, health services, residence life, and campus safety.
- Pair naloxone distribution with overdose prevention education.
- Make access convenient and stigma-free.
- Diversified access points can benefit both the student body and the wider community.
- Use data and student feedback to guide program improvements.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

Institutions interested in establishing or expanding naloxone distribution programs may wish to consider the following strategies:

1. Establish naloxone distribution locations in areas that are accessible and low-barrier to students and staff.
2. Train students, faculty, and staff on overdose recognition, compassionate overdose response, and naloxone administration, and create opportunities for students to serve as peer educators and ambassadors to promote awareness and reduce stigma.
3. Incorporate overdose prevention education early and often from the start of orientation and Welcome Week to continued campus engagement activities throughout the semesters.
4. Partner with local drug and alcohol organizations, healthcare providers, community groups, and state resources.
5. Evaluate distribution efforts regularly and use feedback to strengthen programming and improve access.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR STUDENT LEADERS

Students can play a critical role in expanding access to naloxone and fostering a culture of overdose prevention on campus by:

1. Partnering with Student Health Services and campus wellness programs to promote naloxone availability and overdose prevention education.
2. Serving as peer educators or ambassadors to increase awareness and reduce stigma surrounding substance use and naloxone.
3. Advocating for accessible naloxone distribution locations in student-centered spaces, including residence halls and student unions.
4. Encourage classmates to participate in overdose recognition and naloxone administration training and to carry naloxone so they are prepared to respond in an emergency.
5. Providing feedback to campus leaders on student needs and helping evaluate the effectiveness of naloxone distribution and education efforts.



HELPFUL INFORMATION TO IMPLEMENT A NALOXONE PROGRAM

The following considerations may help colleges and universities assess readiness for implementing or expanding naloxone access initiatives.

- ***Stocking and Accessibility***

- Store naloxone in locations that are visible, easily accessible, and appropriate for emergency response, such as health centers, residence halls, public safety offices, wellness centers, and locations where AEDs are available.
- Designate individuals or departments responsible for inventory management, expiration date monitoring, and restocking.
- Consider implementing low-barrier, public-access distribution models that are easily accessible, non-judgmental, and safe, such as naloxone stations, wall-mounted distribution boxes, or wellness resource centers.
- Pennsylvania's [Overdose Prevention Program](#) can help connect institutions with local naloxone distribution partners and provide technical assistance related to overdose prevention efforts.

- ***Policy and Legal Considerations***

- Pennsylvania has several policies and laws that encourage community use of naloxone:
 - The Department of Health's Naloxone [Standing Order](#) allows for access to naloxone without the need for a patient-specific prescription; there are also three forms of naloxone available over the counter.
 - Good Samaritan law provisions of The Controlled Substance, Drug, Device and Cosmetic Act (35 P.S. §§ 780-113.7--113.8) provide immunity from criminal prosecution for some offenses if a person believes that someone is experiencing a drug overdose and needs immediate medical attention and makes a good-faith report to law enforcement or EMS. The person who makes the report must provide certain information, take further steps to cooperate, and remain with the victim for immunity to apply.
- Institutions should work with campus leadership and legal counsel to ensure overdose prevention policies align with applicable federal, state, and local requirements.

- ***Training and Education***

- Develop campus overdose response procedures and incorporate them into existing emergency preparedness plans. Use this Readiness and Emergency Management for Schools (REMS) Technical Assistance Center fact sheet to develop an Emergency Operations Plan: [Fentanyl and Opioids: Preventing Overdoses and Related Emergencies at K-12 and Higher Education Campuses](#)
- Assess campus needs through surveys, focus groups, or stakeholder discussions.
- Train staff, faculty, student leaders, and campus safety personnel to [recognize overdose signs and respond with naloxone](#).
- Ensure educational materials are readily available to students and employees.



- **Additional Resources**

Institutions seeking additional guidance on implementing campus overdose prevention and harm reduction initiatives may find the following resources helpful:

- SAFE Project – [SAFE Campuses](#) offers technical assistance, training resources, and implementation tools to help colleges and universities develop comprehensive substance use prevention, recovery support, and overdose prevention strategies.
- [Opioid Overdose on Campus: Key Steps to Expand Harm Reduction Efforts](#)

EXPANDING CAMPUS PREVENTION AND SUPPORT EFFORTS

Naloxone distribution is one component of a comprehensive approach to substance use prevention and student wellness.

- **Offer Prevention Education**

- Utilize evidence-based substance use prevention resources.
- Consider incorporating [harm reduction](#) into substance use prevention messaging.
- Incorporate information about fentanyl, overdose prevention, and harm reduction into existing health promotion programming inside and outside the classroom.
- Make educational resources available in locations where students can access them privately and without stigma.
- [Campus Drug Prevention](#) – [Prevention with Purpose Guide](#): Provides evidence-informed strategies, tools, and resources to support comprehensive substance use prevention efforts on college and university campuses.

- **Build Community Partnerships**

- Collaborate with your local county drug and alcohol office, known as the [Single County Authority](#), which can also link schools to local drug and alcohol treatment and prevention resources.
- Engage local partners in training, awareness events, and resource-sharing efforts.

- **Strengthen Student Supports**

- Create safe, supportive, and stigma-free environments where students can discuss substance use concerns and seek help.
- Promote recovery-support services and behavioral health resources.
- Ensure students know where to access confidential assistance.
- Provide information about recovery supports and treatment resources.

- **Know how to connect people to treatment and recovery resources:**

- Call: 1-800-622-HELP (4357)
- Text: 717-216-0905
- Web: treatmentatlas.org



ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

[Compassionate Overdose Response](#)

[Compassionate Overdose Response: Summit Highlights and Key Takeaways](#)

[HMA-Report-Compassionate-Overdose-Response-Summit_5-1-FINAL.pdf](#)

[Webinar replay: Compassionate Overdose Response Summit and Naloxone Dosing Meeting](#)

[Students for Sensible Drug Policy \(SSDP\) Harm Reduction and Overdose Prevention Education program \(HOPE\)](#)

[PA-DOH: Naloxone Training Video – TRAIN PA](#)

[DDAP's Naloxone and Opioid Overdose Response – On-Demand Training \(TMS\)](#)

[NEXT Distro & Prevention Point Pittsburgh Naloxone Mail-To-Home Program](#)

[Nasal Naloxone Instruction Card](#)

[Injectable \(Intramuscular\) Naloxone Instruction Card](#)

[Naloxone Flyer for the General Public \(City of Philadelphia Department of Public Health\)](#)

[Overdose: Recognize and Respond Poster](#)

[Overdose: Recognize and Respond Poster](#) (Placeholder for Local Information)

Overdose Prevention Program



Get Help Now



This document is for informational purposes only and should not be considered legal advice. Institutions should consult with legal counsel and appropriate local authorities to ensure compliance with applicable laws and policies regarding naloxone access and overdose prevention policies. If you would like external legal input, the [Network for Public Health Law's Harm Reduction Legal Project](#) may be able to offer support. For assistance, email harmreduction@networkforphl.org.