

Practice Note

Social Workers role in the administration of Naloxone

The Manitoba College of Social Workers (MCSW) acknowledges the important role of social workers in responding to the opioid crisis, which may include administration of Naloxone. MCSW is committed to responding to the opioid epidemic in our communities and recognize social workers may be directly seeing the impact of the opioid crisis in the cities or rural areas where they practice.

Naloxone, or Narcan, is a life-saving medication that can temporarily reverse the effects of an opioid overdose and allow time for medical help to arrive. Naloxone is safe for all ages- it only affects the body if there are opioids in the system.. According to the Government of Canada, you cannot use Naloxone improperly and it does not create dependence. It is safe to keep a naloxone kit on handⁱ.

On December 10, 2020, an amendment was made in Manitoba to the Regulated Health Professions General Regulation (2.1), to clarify that any person may administer Naloxone when indicated for emergency use in response to opioid overdose.

An overdose is always an emergency. In the event of an emergency, Social Workers are encouraged to contact 911 and allow qualified health providers to intervene and administer Naloxone where possible. Social Workers only administer Naloxone when there are no qualified health providers available within a reasonable period of time. Social Workers who intend to carry or administer Naloxone must ensure that they have completed and maintain currency in training related to the safe administration of Naloxone as required by the [Government of Manitoba](#).

Social Workers carrying and/or administering Naloxone must do so with knowledge and adherence to relevant legislation, the MCSW Code of Ethics, the MCSW Standards of Practice and the principles of 'due care' – the care that a reasonable person would use under the same or similar circumstances. This includes an obligation for Social Workers to intervene in the best interest of service participants and to practice within their level of skill and competency, seeking consultation and supervision as appropriate.

It is recommended that Social Workers who intend to carry or administer Naloxone in the context of their employment consult with their employers and follow any relevant policy and procedures.

MCSW encourages Social Workers working with at-risk populations to learn about Naloxone, obtain training in its administration and carry a Naloxone kit. Social workers should also be aware of the organizations in their region that provide Naloxone kits, either free or at costⁱⁱ.

The *Manitoba Good Samaritan Act* states that a Manitoban is not liable in damages for injury or death to the victim caused by the person's acts or omissions in providing voluntary emergency medical services, aid or advice, unless that person is grossly negligent.

While legislation supports the administration of Naloxone, it is up to each Social Worker to decide whether the administration of Naloxone is something they are comfortable doing in an emergency.

Witnessing an overdose can be scary. Social workers are encouraged to seek assistance after witnessing trauma if necessary.

For further information and training please see the resources outlined below.

Resources:

<https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/opioids>

[The Good Samaritan Protection Act, C.C.S.M. c. G65](#)

[Take-Home Naloxone Distribution Program](#)

[MB Health Training Manual](#), pg. 18 list of training resources

[MB Government Shared Health MOST program](#)

<https://College of Pharmacists of Manitoba Naloxone resources>

<https://naloxonecare.com/>

<https://Accessing+Naloxone+in+Manitoba.pdf>

ⁱ <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/opioids>

ⁱⁱ <https://www.manitoba.ca/health/publichealth/naloxone.html>

Practice Notes provide support and information for Manitoba social workers, employers, and members of the public regarding social work practice issues. These notes offer general guidance only and are not a substitution for legal advice. College members with specific inquiries are invited to consult the College.

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