



Public Health Brief

Richard O. Johnson, M.D., MPH

Public Health Officer

Office: 530-694-2235, Ext 249

e-mail: rjohnson@alpinecountyca.gov

Nichole Williamson

HHS Director

Office: 530-694-2235

24/7/365 Emergency Contact Numbers

Dr. Johnson's cell: (760) 914-0496

Dispatch: 530-694-2231, Ext 330



Wednesday, August 21, 2019

Note: We are passing this information along, since it is not clear whether the affected supply of drugs crosses north into our area. So far, we have not had any reports of increased overdoses in Alpine County in the last few weeks.



Outbreak of Opioid Overdoses in the Eastern Sierra

The last few weeks have seen a spike in the number of opioid overdoses in the Bishop and Mammoth Lakes areas. A Bishop police officer estimates there have been 6-8 overdoses in and around Bishop in the last few weeks, with two lives lost, while the Mammoth Hospital ER has reported two non-fatal overdoses in the last two weeks. These are alarming numbers for our rural area.

It is rumored that the deaths, and presumably some of the other overdoses, are linked to a dangerous batch of heroin that reached our area. Often such overdose outbreaks are attributable to heroin that is laced with fentanyl, a super-potent injectable opioid.

Many overdose deaths can be prevented. One way to do that is to distribute the overdose antidote, naloxone (also known as Narcan, a brand name), in the community and to equip law enforcement and other public safety personnel with this lifesaving drug. Naloxone comes in nasal spray and injectable forms for emergency use and many communities in America have successfully reduced



Public Health

Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Alpine County Health Department, 75-B Diamond Valley Rd., Markleeville, CA 96120

Alpine County Board of Supervisors, Phone: (530) 694-2281

District 1: Donald M. Jardine, District 2: Ron Hames, District 3: Katherine Rakow,

District 4: Terry Woodrow, District 5: David Griffith

overdose deaths by getting naloxone out there, into the hands of people most likely to encounter an overdose.

(Note: We have trained over 50 responders at multiple locations in Alpine County and supplied them with the naloxone nasal spray. So far, we have had one 911 call where naloxone was used.)

Naloxone (Narcan) nasal spray is currently available from pharmacies in California and Nevada without a prescription.

People who may need naloxone are not all getting it:

Although the number of prescriptions for naloxone doubled from 2017-2018, only 1 naloxone prescription is dispensed for every 70 high-dose opioid prescriptions. Rural counties are nearly 3 times more likely to be ranked low dispensing than metropolitan counties. There were approx. 48,000 drug overdose deaths involving opioids in the US in 2017.

Opioid use disorder (addiction) is a challenging but treatable disease. The most effective approach is medication-assisted treatment (MAT), which combines medications which prevent withdrawal and control cravings with counseling or psychotherapy.

To access mental health and/or substance use services in Alpine County, our Behavioral Health Department is your point of contact. All services are offered with respect for the individual and with the belief that your natural tendency is to strive toward health. Their goal is to assist you in that process, regardless of ability to pay. If MAT is determined by assessment to be the appropriate level of care needed, that will be arranged.

Call or come in to access services and speak to our staff, office hours are Monday through Friday 8-5. The phone number is 530-694-1816 and address is 75-C Diamond Valley Rd. For afterhours help call the Crisis line at 1-800-318-8212 or 530-694-1487. Bear Valley Behavioral Health Services can be reached at 209-753-2831. Services are available at any of the four office locations throughout the county as well as in locations outside the office to suit clients' needs. If you are not an Alpine County resident, the Behavioral Health Department will refer you based on your county of residence.

As Alpine County Health Officer, I urge people who use drugs to be careful and to learn about services available to reduce harms from substance use. There are a lot of people in our area now working to help people who use drugs stay alive and safe, and to provide help when people want to get off drugs. I hope that people who use opioids and the people who care about them will look into getting naloxone and learning when and how to use it. Naloxone nasal spray is safe, easy to use, and saves lives.

For more information about naloxone (Narcan):

<https://www.cdc.gov/vitalsigns/naloxone/index.html>



Public Health
Prevent. Promote. Protect.

Alpine County Health Department, 75-B Diamond Valley Rd., Markleeville, CA 96120
Alpine County Board of Supervisors, Phone: (530) 694-2281
District 1: Donald M. Jardine, District 2: Ron Hames, District 3: Katherine Rakow,
District 4: Terry Woodrow, District 5: David Griffith