



# Financing Naloxone Dispensed from Illinois Emergency Departments

## A Rapid Policy Assessment

### The Problem

In Illinois, 2,233 people died of overdose in 2019, an increase of 3% from 2018 and nearly double the number in 2010. Nationally, the latest data show that more people died of drug overdose in the twelve months ending June 2020 than in any other twelve-month period on record.

Many opioid deaths are preventable with the administration of naloxone, a safe and effective medication that reverses opioid overdose if given in time.

The Illinois legislature has taken action to increase access to this lifesaving medication but barriers still remain. Provisions in HB2589 (Conroy/Fine) are designed to facilitate naloxone dispensing through hospitals, a strategy supported by the findings of this study.

### The Need

Many people who overdose are treated in hospital emergency departments (EDs), either immediately after the overdose or for other conditions related to opioid use such as injection-related infections.

Ensuring that individuals who have overdosed as well as those who are likely to be present in the event of a future overdose received naloxone in the ED represents a critical opportunity to reduce overdose death and disability. Unfortunately, many people who receive a prescription in the ED do not fill it.

It is imperative that EDs provide the medication directly to patients yet there are barriers to doing so.

The Illinois Public Health Institute conducted a series of interviews with key informants in eight states with ED naloxone distribution programs. Highlights include:

**California:** Through the Bridge Program sixty-nine emergency departments have distributed nearly 34,000 naloxone kits since 2018. The program is funded with federal funds through the CA Department of Health Care Services.

**New York City:** NYC allocates \$500,000 per year from its general fund for Opioid Overdose Prevention Programs to distribute naloxone, which includes approximately 20 hospitals.

**Michigan:** Nineteen hospitals participate in the Michigan naloxone distribution program and have received over 2,000 naloxone kits in the first year. It is funded by the MI Department of Health and Human Services.

### Recommendations

There is an opportunity for Illinois to continue being a leader by ensuring that everyone at risk of overdose leaves the emergency department with naloxone in hand.

**RECOMMENDATION 1: Establish a state fund to purchase naloxone and provide that naloxone to hospitals for dispensing to individuals upon discharge from the emergency department.**

**RECOMMENDATION 2: Require or incentivize hospitals to offer naloxone to all patients at risk of future overdose upon discharge from the emergency department.**

**RECOMMENDATION 3: Require that all health insurers in Illinois cover naloxone dispensed to patients upon discharge from the emergency department.**

Currently, IDHS is exploring the development of a naloxone distribution program funded by federal funds and other existing sources of revenue. Provisions in HB2589 are designed to facilitate hospitals in Illinois to effectively take advantage of this lifesaving initiative.