



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Timothy M. Kennedy

Senator Kennedy Announces Expanded Access to Naloxone to Prevent Overdose and Save Lives in Bill Passed Through Senate

TIMOTHY M. KENNEDY March 27, 2014

| ISSUE: **CONTROLLED SUBSTANCES, DRUGS**

Senator Kennedy cosponsored bill that will help combat rising numbers of overdoses to heroin and prescription drugs.

Kennedy pushed legislation to provide family members and friends of addicts with access to overdose antidotes that save lives.

ALBANY, N.Y. – Senator Tim Kennedy, D-Buffalo, announced the New York State Senate passed legislation that will expand access to Naloxone, commonly known as Narcan, to combat rising numbers of overdoses to heroin and prescription drugs. Senator Kennedy cosponsored the bill ([S.6477b](#)) and helped push it through the Senate to provide those closest to addicts – parents, family members and friends – with increased accessibility to drug-overdose antidotes that save lives. Naloxone can prevent overdose death when it's promptly administered.

The Erie County Department of Health reports there were 29 heroin overdose deaths across the county in 2013, a 45 percent increase from the 20 heroin overdoses in 2012. In total, there were 106 overdose deaths resulting from all types of opiates, including heroin and prescription painkillers like hydrocodone and oxycodone, countywide in 2013. That's an increase of 32 deaths, compared to 2009 numbers, according to a recent Buffalo News report.

With surging levels of prescription drug abuse and opiate addiction, there is a high demand for overdose antidotes, but access to them remains seriously limited. This legislation will allow health care practitioners to issue non-patient-specific orders of Naloxone to certified training organizations that will disburse the drug to individuals who complete a training course. Across the state, families are taking these overdose prevention and Naloxone training classes, so they're prepared to protect their loved ones. However, many families still cannot gain access to the antidote, even after their training, due to the lack of sufficient access to Naloxone.

"Many parents, family members and friends of addicts fear their loved ones may accidentally overdose on heroin or prescription drugs," Kennedy said, "but with expanded access to Naloxone, they will at the very least be equipped with the necessary antidote to save lives in emergency situations."

With the new ability to write non-patient-specific prescriptions for Naloxone, health care practitioners can issue large, standing orders to authorized training programs that will then disburse the overdose antidote to those individuals who take their training. This will ensure more New Yorkers are trained to recognize the signs of overdose and equipped with the skills and antidote to appropriately respond.

"This important legislation will dramatically improve access to lifesaving antidotes that prevent overdose deaths," Kennedy said. "Western New York is enduring an epidemic of overdoses resulting from the surging abuse of painkillers and heroin, and local families have been calling for action to help put a stop to this growing public health crisis. This bill represents a crucial step forward, and once it's signed into law, this new measure will undoubtedly save lives. Yet still, our work to prevent drug abuse and addiction will remain far from over."

Under the legislation, health care professionals will also be able to issue patient-specific prescriptions to those at risk of overdose. The bill also allows pharmacists to dispense Naloxone to individuals and training programs through the patient-specific or non-patient-specific prescriptions. Naloxone has no effect unless an individual has opiates in their system. The legislation has been sent to the Assembly for approval.

Accidental overdose is the leading cause of accidental death in New York State, now surpassing car accidents. Many of these deaths are preventable, since studies show most overdoses are witnessed and opioid overdoses can be reversed through the use of Naloxone during a one-to-three-hour window. A 2010 report from the Centers for Disease Control indicated that more than 10,000 documented overdoses were reversed as a result of naloxone distribution and education since 1996. While the number of overdose reversals has grown since then, the CDC still reports that accidental overdose to prescription drugs claims one life every 19 minutes.

In recent years, New York State has taken major steps forward in the fight to end prescription drug abuse and addiction. Senator Kennedy has been demanding action to help address the epidemic, and new legislation is effectively combating the crisis. The I-STOP legislation passed in 2012 has prevented doctor-shopping, reduced painkiller diversion and limited the misuse and abuse of controlled substances through tighter controls and monitoring systems. In 2011, the state enacted the 911 Good Samaritan Law which encourages individuals to call 911 if they witness a drug overdose.

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Senator Timothy M. Kennedy represents the New York State Senate's 63rd District, which is comprised of the towns of Cheektowaga, the city of Lackawanna and nearly all of the city of Buffalo. More information is available at <http://kennedy.nysenate.gov>.