

# Dare School Board approves new Naloxone policy

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## Move will allow school employees to administer overdose rescue drug

In a unanimous vote at its May 8 meeting, the Dare County Board of Education passed a new policy allowing school personnel to administer Naloxone. The so-called rescue drug that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, Naloxone has become an important tool in the battle against the opioid epidemic.

Dare County School Board Member Matt Brauer asked if school nurses and school resource officers should be the primary administrator of Naloxone.

School personnel are not required to train to use Naloxone, but the policy establishes guidelines for the storage, procurement, administration and other details related to Naloxone on campus. Students and parents or guardians will be notified annually of the policy.

According to the draft policy text in the meeting agenda packet, Naloxone will be stored in the school nurse's office or another location designated by the school nurse or superintendent, and it "shall be made available to those trained to administer it in the event of a suspected drug-related overdose."

The school nurse will ensure that all trained staff are aware of the Naloxone's storage location and will periodically check the expiration date, notifying administration prior to its expiration, according to the policy.

Lists of school district employees who have completed Naloxone administration training will be maintained in the school district's administrative office and in the head nurse supervisor's office. Anyone who administers Naloxone "in accordance with North Carolina law is immune from any civil or criminal liability," the policy notes.

"The Dare County Board of Education makes no representation regarding the availability of Naloxone in the school system at any given time," the policy states.

The policy also says law enforcement will be notified of the possession or use of illegal substances and that students using illegal substances will be disciplined in accordance with board policies.

Other district policies that were revised or added at the May 8 meeting were done so at the recommendation of the North Carolina School Boards Association, according to Dare County Board of Education Attorney Rachel Hitch.

"But this is one [policy] that came up in conjunction with your local health department," Hitch said, adding that Assistant Superintendent Steve Blackstock worked on the draft policy in conjunction with school nurses before it was brought to the board for adoption.

During a roughly 10-minute discussion on the topic, School Board Member Matt Brauer asked several questions, including whether the policy came from a standing order from the state. The standing order since August 2017, signed by the North Carolina State Health Director, allows anyone at risk of experiencing an overdose, anyone who may be able to assist someone experiencing an overdose, or anyone who requests naloxone, to receive the medication.

"The standing order from the state removes hurdles for you to have the medicine in the school system if you need it...so that you may [have this policy]," Hitch responded.

"Why wouldn't we just...lay it off on the school nurse, who is a healthcare provider, or even the school resource officer, who's a first responder? Shouldn't they be the primary person to administer" Naloxone? Brauer asked.

Dare County Schools Superintendent Steve Basnight responded that the goal is to make Naloxone available where it's needed, in accessible locations. Blackstock agreed, adding that many activities take place in school buildings after school hours when the school nurse is not onsite.

The Dare County Department of Health and Human Services distributes Naloxone at no cost to community members, so Hitch noted that teachers and students may already have the medication on hand.

In response to Brauer's question about potential civil litigation, she said that she'd learned from a Dare County Health Department presentation that if someone were not overdosing and received Naloxone, "there are no implications," meaning they wouldn't suffer harm.

"The idea was: The administration is easy, the risk is very minimal...and the possibility that the issue finds its way to your schools is unfortunately very high; so that was the thinking behind the policy," Hitch said.

Board Member Mary Ellon Ballance said that some teachers and substitutes are also trained first responders or volunteer first responders who may have used Naloxone in that role to treat overdoses. "I know that Hatteras has several that are also members of the rescue squad and work at the rescue squad in the summer, so they would have access [to Naloxone]."

Board Member David Twiddy asked about what might happen if a student experienced an overdose while on an activity bus away from campus and no one there had the medication.

Basnight said that the policy doesn't require Naloxone to be available in "every aspect of school life. What we're saying is, if it's going to be in the building, here's where we want it."

"It's similar to the AEDs [Automated external defibrillators], Hitch added. "We don't have them everywhere, but we know that if we have them somewhere, that we have a chance of helping a kid."