



EDUCATION

‘Fentanyl is everywhere.’ Wake schools wants to be ready to treat opioid overdoses.

BY T. KEUNG HUI

UPDATED MAY 21, 2024 5:37 PM

CARY

Wake County schools will now be required to make sure that they’ve got employees who can treat opioid overdoses on campus.

The Wake County school board approved Tuesday [a new policy on the emergency use of Naloxone](#), which can reverse an opioid overdose when given in time. Every Wake school will be required to have at least three employees who are trained in how to administer Naloxone, which is the generic name for the drug Narcan.

The policy comes as opioid overdoses and addiction have surged nationally.

In 2022, 219 people died from drug overdoses in Wake County, [The News & Observer previously reported](#). Opioids — medicines prescribed for pain like codeine, fentanyl, oxycodone and morphine — were responsible in three-quarters of the deaths.

“Fentanyl is everywhere,” said school board member Wing Ng. “Fentanyl is a crisis. We all have to be aware of the signs and symptoms.”

STOCKING NALOXONE IN SCHOOLS

The policy directs Superintendent Robert Taylor to develop a program to place Naloxone at schools, early learning centers and district administrative offices. There’s currently no money in the budget to purchase Naloxone.

The district estimates that it could cost \$6,500 to \$30,000 to place two Naloxone doses at each school.

The board accelerated adoption of the policy to get it in place before a June 5 deadline to apply for funding from the county.

The Wake County Board of Commissioners recently approved a plan to use \$300,000 next year toward expanding access to Naloxone. It's part of the \$65.6 million that Wake County will get over the next 18 years from a historic national opioid settlement.

The Wake policy doesn't require Naloxone to be available at activities held off school grounds, such as field trips or off-site athletic events. The policy also wouldn't guarantee availability of Naloxone at schools.

A 'RESPONSIBLE ACTION' FOR SCHOOLS

"All 200 Wake County schools deserve to have Naloxone," said Barb Walsh, executive director of the Fentanyl Victims Network of North Carolina. "It's no different than an epi-pen, or an AED system or a fire extinguisher. It's all life-saving equipment."

Walsh has been pushing for schools to add Naloxone since her daughter had a fatal overdose after unknowingly ingesting fentanyl. Walsh told Wake that it now joins 25 North Carolina school districts in having a policy on Naloxone.

School board chair Chris Heagarty thanked Walsh for her work.

"I hope what we do here will not only save lives but also serve as an example to other schools around the state that this is a responsible action that everyone should be taking," Heagarty said. "Thank you for your advocacy."

This story was originally published May 21, 2024, 4:42 PM.

RELATED STORIES FROM RALEIGH NEWS & OBSERVER

EDUCATION

WAKE COUNTY

How Wake schools aim to ‘be as ready as we can be’ when opioid overdoses happen

APRIL 23, 2024 5:35 PM

How Wake County will spend millions of dollars in opioid settlement money

APRIL 19, 2024 9:53 AM



T. KEUNG HUI

    919-829-4534

T. Keung Hui has covered K-12 education for the News & Observer since 1999, helping parents, students, school employees and the community understand the vital role education plays in North Carolina. His primary focus is Wake County, but he also covers statewide education issues.

COPYRIGHT

**COMMENTING
POLICY**

**REPORT
NEWS**

**COOKIE
PREFERENCES**

**PRIVACY
POLICY**

**YOUR
PRIVACY
CHOICES**

**TERMS
OF
USE**