

## STOP-IT TALKING POINTS

### ***What is STOP-IT?***

The **School Training Overdose Preparedness and Intelligence Taskforce (STOP-IT)** is an Arizona Department of Education (ADE) sponsored initiative to address the opioid crisis in Arizona schools. The mission of STOP-IT is to develop a comprehensive and sustainable school opioid overdose education and preparation toolkit to ensure Arizona schools are equipped with the tools, policies and resources necessary to prevent and respond to opioid overdoses on campus.

### ***Who is represented on STOP-IT?***

The STOP-IT taskforce includes more than 60 representative from a diverse array of public disciplines and government agencies. Within the private sector, representatives include physicians (psychiatry, addiction medicine, emergency medicine, pediatrics), public policy specialists, psychologists, counselors, prevention and treatment programs specialists, law enforcement agents, families, students, educational specialists, and researchers. Representatives from government agencies include the AZ Department of Education, Arizona school principals and superintendents, the AZ Department of Health, the Attorney General's Office, the Governor's Office, Tribal leadership, the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Arena (HIDTA), the state Medicaid system, the AZ Board of Pharmacy and the state Child Mortality Review program.

### ***How is the opioid epidemic relevant to schools?***

AZ is the primary conduit through which more than 50% of all U.S. illicit fentanyl is trafficked. Each day in Arizona, at least five people die from an opioid overdose. In 2023, Arizona recorded more than 4000 non-fatal opioid overdoses and 1,928 fatal overdoses resulting in more than 8000 emergency and inpatient visits. According to the AZ Child Fatality Review Program data for 2021 and 2022, at least eighty children under age 18 died from overdose, with seven deaths in middle-school age children (11-14) and up to four in school settings. In addition, 132 non-fatal overdoses were reported in just 2023.

### ***What is the current state of opioid preparedness in AZ schools?***

There is currently no standardization in Arizona schools on the topic of opioid overdose prevention or management. Many Arizona schools do not stock opioid overdose reversal agents such as naloxone. In addition, schools that do carry naloxone have differing policies regarding who is allowed to deliver the drug, what training is required prior to drug delivery, how and where naloxone is stored, and how

staff and students are trained on the topic of opioid overdose prevention and addiction.

### ***What Arizona laws are currently in place for school opioid overdose preparedness?***

There are multiple state laws in place that support schools to stock and deliver naloxone. To summarize them, schools must have policies and procedures for employees to give naloxone or other drugs that can reverse opioid overdoses to students or staff in an emergency. Employees who do this are not legally responsible for any harm or lack of care, unless they act very carelessly, on purpose, or with bad intentions. Unfortunately, misinterpretation and misunderstanding of these laws has resulted in suboptimal compliance. The applicable laws are as follow:

- [Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 15-341\(A\)\(43\).](#)
  - A school board *shall*: Prescribe and enforce policies and procedures for the emergency administration by an employee of a school district pursuant to section 36-2267 of naloxone hydrochloride or any other opioid antagonist approved by the United States food and drug administration.
  
- [Ariz. Rev. Stat. § 36-2267. Administration of opioid antagonist; exemption from civil liability; definition.](#)
  - A. A person may administer an opioid antagonist that is prescribed or dispensed pursuant to section 32-1979 or 36-2266 in accordance with the protocol specified by the physician, nurse practitioner, pharmacist or other health professional or that is received from a county health department pursuant to section 36-192 to a person who is experiencing an opioid-related overdose.
  - B. A person who in good faith and without compensation administers an opioid antagonist to a person who is experiencing an opioid-related overdose is not liable for any civil or other damages as the result of any act or omission by the person rendering the care or as the result of any act or failure to act to arrange for further medical treatment or care for the person experiencing the overdose, unless the person while rendering the care acts with gross negligence, willful misconduct or intentional wrongdoing.
  - C. For the purposes of this section, "person" includes an employee of a school district or charter school who is acting in the person's official capacity.

### ***What are opioids?***

Opioids are a class of prescription and illicit drugs. They are commonly prescribed to alleviate pain but use can also lead to life-threatening overdoses and addiction. Illegal opioids include heroin and non-pharmaceutical fentanyl. Opioids come in a variety of forms including pill, capsule, powder, liquid, and film, that can be swallowed, smoked, snorted, injected, or absorbed through the skin or mucous membranes.

### ***What is fentanyl?***

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine. It is often mixed with other drugs, such as heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine, or online supplements without the user's knowledge, increasing the risk of overdose and death. Fentanyl can be found in various forms, such as powder, pills, patches, nasal sprays, and lollipops. Recent trends to press fentanyl into pills resembling common prescription opioids such as oxycodone, Oxycontin®, Xanax® and Ativan® has made illicit purchase of these drugs particularly dangerous. Fentanyl is also now distributed with color, flavor and scent additives to have it resemble candy as a recruitment tool for children.

### ***What is naloxone?***

Naloxone is a medication that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose. It works by displacing the opioids from the receptors in the brain, restoring normal breathing and consciousness. Naloxone is safe and has no potential for abuse. It is not dangerous to the person it is delivered to, even if they are not experiencing an opioid overdose. It only affects people who have opioids in their system and has no effect on people who do not use opioids. Thus, naloxone should be delivered to anyone suspected of experiencing an opioid overdose. Naloxone can be administered by injection or nasal spray. It can be obtained from pharmacies, health care providers, or community organizations. Naloxone has a short duration of action, so repeated doses may be needed until medical help arrives.

### ***What is an opioid overdose?***

An opioid overdose is a life-threatening condition that occurs when too much opioid is taken or when opioids are combined with other drugs or alcohol. An opioid overdose can cause the following signs and symptoms:

- Slow or shallow breathing
- Blue lips and fingernails
- Pale and clammy skin
- Pinpoint pupils
- Low blood pressure and slow pulse
- Limp body and loss of muscle tone
- Loss of consciousness and unresponsiveness



An opioid overdose can lead to brain damage, organ failure, or death if not treated promptly. The best way to prevent an opioid overdose is to avoid using opioids or to use them as prescribed by a doctor. If an opioid overdose is suspected, 911 should be contacted and naloxone should be immediately delivered.

### ***What is opioid addiction?***

Opioid addiction is a chronic disease that involves changes in the brain caused by repeated use of opioids. Opioid addiction can cause compulsive drug-seeking behavior, loss of control over drug use, and continued use despite negative consequences. Opioid addiction can affect anyone, regardless of age, gender, race, or socioeconomic status. Opioid addiction can impair physical and mental health, social and family relationships, work and school performance, and quality of life. Opioid addiction can be treated with Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD) which combines medications that reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms, such as methadone, buprenorphine, or naltrexone, with behavioral therapies that address the psychological and social aspects of addiction.

### ***What is STOP-IT's position on naloxone in schools?***

Naloxone should be widely available in schools to allow for rapid administration in the event of a suspected opioid overdose. Clinical studies have confirmed that naloxone can save lives and does not encourage or enable drug use. Naloxone should be stored in accessible locations, such as first aid kits, nurse's offices, or lockers, and accompanied by clear instructions on how to use it. School personnel should be trained on how to recognize and respond to an opioid overdose, including how to administer naloxone and call for emergency services. Naloxone should be part of a comprehensive approach to address substance use and mental health issues in schools, which may include screening, prevention, education, counseling, referral, and support services.

### ***What is STOP-IT's position on student education on opioids in schools?***

STOP-IT is committed to ensuring every student has the opportunity to learn about the dangers of illicit opioids. The taskforce is developing a standardized student education module for schools to adapt. The education will include content on trends in the opioid epidemic, fentanyl, opioid overdoses, opioid use disorder and how to reverse an overdose with intranasal naloxone.

### ***Who can I contact if I want to learn more about STOP-IT?***

More information on the STOP-IT initiative can be found on the ADE website at <https://www.azed.gov/stopit>.

You can also email [schoolsafety-socialwellness@azed.gov](mailto:schoolsafety-socialwellness@azed.gov).