How Harm Reduction Organizations Access Naloxone

Harm reduction organizations are the primary point of access to this life-saving medication, especially for the most common overdose rescuers—people who use drugs.

Of the 16.95 million doses of naloxone distributed in the United States in 2021,

- 94 (79%) received naloxone from a government program or agency.
- 38 (32%) received naloxone from a buyers club such as Remedy Alliance or the North America Syringe Exchange Network.
- 39 (32%) received naloxone through traditional non-pharmacy medical channels.
- 16 (13%) were distributed through retail pharmacies.
- 45 (32%) were distributed outside of “retail pharmacies and traditional health care facilities” (learn more) such as harm reduction organizations, health departments and community-based organizations.

R Street surveyed how harm reduction organizations procure naloxone in 2023.

Types of organizations surveyed:
- Government: 34%
- Nonprofit: 62%
- Other: 4%

Do organizations pay for their naloxone?
- 51% (61) Received for free
- 42% (50) Paid for some, received some for free
- 7% (8) Paid for all

Regional differences in naloxone sources:

View Naloxone Access and Group Purchasing: A Brief History
U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved naloxone for opioid overdose reversal. The injectable product was intended for use by medical personnel.

Some harm reduction organizations began distributing injectable naloxone to their program participants but struggled to access the medication due to its cost and prescription status.

The Opioid Safety and Naloxone Network (OSNN) Buyers Club was founded to negotiate naloxone prices with pharmaceutical companies.

The FDA approved NARCAN, the first intranasal naloxone product purpose-designed for laypeople.

With fentanyl spreading throughout the country and overdoses reaching record levels, OSNN Buyers Club connected 110 organizations with more than 1 million doses of injectable naloxone.

→ March—The American Rescue Plan was signed into law, allocating an unprecedented $30 million in federal funding for harm reduction services, including naloxone.
→ In response to a shortage of injectable naloxone, OSNN Buyers Club reorganized as Remedy Alliance/For the People, diversified its pharmaceutical company relationships and received an emergency prescription exemption from the FDA.

Opioid Settlement Funds
→ February—Lawsuit between 46 states and opioid manufacturer (Johnson & Johnson) and distributors (McKesson, Amerisource Bergen and Cardinal Health) settled for $26 billion.
→ September—Most eligible states received their first-year payments. Harm reduction services, such as naloxone provision and distribution, are among the approved uses for these funds.

The State of Naloxone Group Purchasing
→ August 2022–August 2023—in its first full year of operation, Remedy Alliance/For the People supplied more than 1.6 million doses of naloxone to nearly 200 harm reduction organizations.