



Portland Needle Exchange Naloxone Distribution Report 2017

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The Portland Needle Exchange offers naloxone (or “Narcan”) and response trainings, free of charge, to anyone enrolled in the program who would like to gain the skills to recognize and respond to an opiate overdose. Staff have also presented a full-length version of this training (90 minutes) at a variety of settings throughout the state. The Needle Exchange has distributed naloxone since 2015, with a standing order through the clinic’s medical director. On January 1, 2017, a new data collection system was created in order to capture the efficacy of the program and better represent the experiences of drug users who are successfully reversing overdoses in their homes and in the community throughout Southern Maine.

When a person enrolls to receive naloxone they complete a *New Registration* form. They receive a 5-10 minute training on how to recognize an overdose, risk factors for overdosing, and how to properly administer the preparation of naloxone that they wish to receive. Nasal and intramuscular preparations are available, although supply is varied and currently by donation only. Each time a person returns to get a refill of naloxone, a *Refill* form is completed along with an explanation of what happened to the kit of naloxone that they were last given. If the client reports that they used it to reverse an overdose, more questions are asked about the reversal. All of the information that is received is anonymous- individual clients are tracked through the use of a unique anonymous code. This is the same code that is used for the Needle Exchange program. If the naloxone is being distributed at a community training the code attached to that form is “111111” . Participants are always given the option to decline a response to any question.

Overview

- 502 individual clients enrolled in the naloxone distribution program
- 562 refills of naloxone were provided
- 291 overdoses were reversed by enrolled clients
- A total of 2,791 doses of naloxone were distributed
- Staff presented over 100 “Overdose Recognition, Response and Naloxone” trainings to various groups and agencies including but not limited to: Cumberland County Jail, Maine Medical Partners Family Practices in York and Cumberland counties, The Opportunity Alliance, Oxford Street Shelter, Portland Recovery Community Center, York County Shelter Programs, Crossroads, Milestone Recovery and Portland Housing Authority.

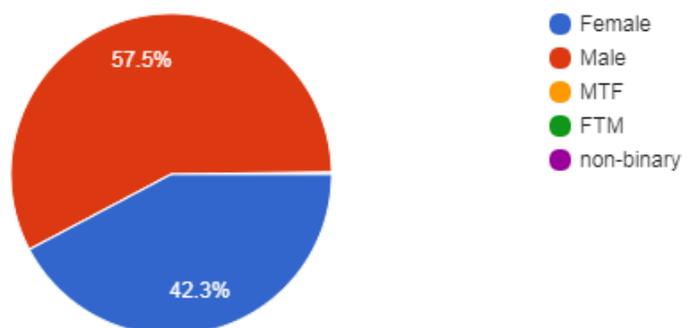
New Registrations

Demographics

- The majority of new clients were male, with 57.5% identifying as male and 42.3% identifying as female. One client reported their gender as non-binary.

Gender

426 responses



- The majority of new clients were white. The racial/ethnic breakdown was:
 - 97.4% White
 - 3.1% Latino/Latina/Hispanic
 - 1.4% Native American
 - 1.4% Black/African American
 - 0.5% Asian/Pacific Islander
- New enrollees were asked, “Last night, where did you stay?” About half of new clients (50.1%) reported that they had stayed in their own private housing (apartment or house). 22.9% reported staying in someone else’s housing (apartment, house). 13.4% reported staying in the shelter, 4.6% were outdoors (including car, camp, ect.), 2.2% where in a supportive housing or program, and 1.9% were in a hotel.
- People reported coming to the Portland Needle Exchange to receive naloxone from many different towns including: Biddeford, Caribou, Lewiston, Naples, Portland, Saco, South Portland, Westbrook, Scarborough, Lisbon Falls, Gray, Old Orchard Beach, Wells, Richmond, Windham, and towns in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Drug Use

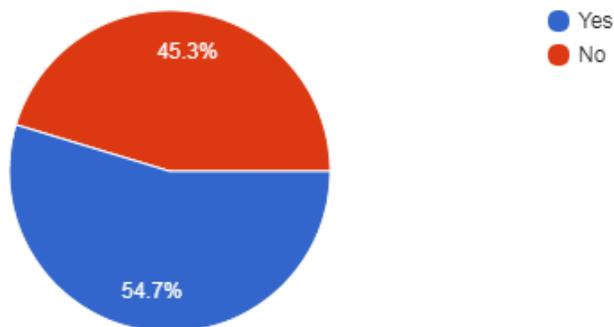
- The majority of people who received naloxone at the Portland Needle Exchange reported having used drugs within the last 30 days. Only 8.8% of clients reported no drug use in the last 30 days.
- Many enrollees used multiple drugs within the last 30 days. Below is a break down of the drugs that were reported.
 - 63% reported heroin use
 - 35.2% reported cocaine/crack use
 - 35% reported buprenorphine (suboxone, subutex) use
 - 19.7% reported pharmaceutical opioid use
 - 16.3% reported benzo use
 - 13.7% reported alcohol use
 - 13.5% reported methamphetamine use

Overdose History

Each new enrollee was asked if they had ever overdosed in their life.

Have you ever overdosed?

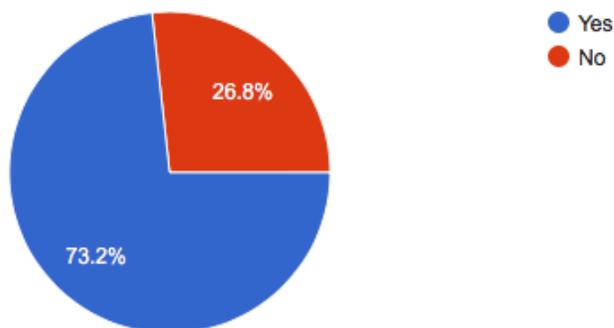
386 responses



Of the people that had experienced an overdose, 34.6% had overdosed once, 20.5% had overdosed twice, 12.7% had overdosed three times, and the remaining 32.2% reported having overdosed four or more times in their life. Of the people that had experienced an overdose, 73.2% reported that naloxone had been administered during their overdose.

If yes, have you ever been narcaned?

213 responses



When asked who had used naloxone on them (Being “narcaned” is a common way for clients to describe an overdose incident. Referring to naloxone as “narcan” is also very common), 71.9% reported that a medical person (EMT, fire, police, doctor) had used naloxone on them at one time and 51.6% reported that a non-medical person had used naloxone on them at one time. Thus, many people had experienced both medical and non-medical naloxone administration.

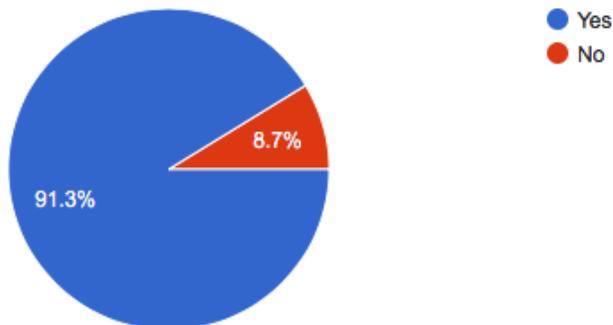
When asked what drugs were taken the last time the person had overdosed. 90.1% reported taking what they assumed to be heroin, 14.3% reported benzos, 10.8% reported pharmaceutical opioids, 7.9% reported what they assumed to be cocaine/crack, 4.4% reported alcohol. Six months into data collection a unique category for “Fentanyl” was added and since July 1, 2017, 13.3% of people reported that they had taken what they assumed to be or was confirmed fentanyl the last time that they overdosed. Field testing by law enforcement, urine tests positive for fentanyl and reports inconsistent for heroin overdoses also help support this evidence.

Each new client was also asked if they had ever witnessed an overdose and 91.3% reported yes. Clients reported witnessing between 1 and 200 overdoses in their life, although the majority

of people reported witnessing between 1 and 10 overdoses.

Have you ever witnessed an overdose?

389 responses



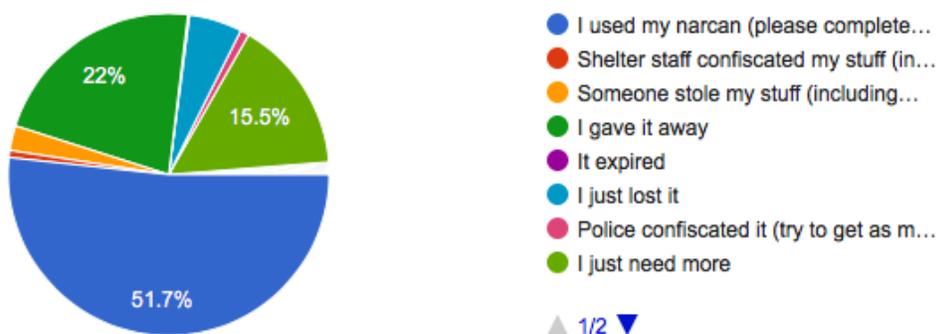
All new enrollees were asked, “What is your primary reason for getting this narcan today?” 90.2% of people reported getting naloxone because “friends/partner/neighbors/people in my community are at risk.” Additionally, 56.8% of people reported “I am at risk,” 4.7% of people reported “I have a family member at risk” and 2.9% reported “I am a service provider and I work with clients who are at risk.”

Naloxone Refills

When clients came back for a refill of their naloxone, staff asked them what happened to their last kit. 51.7% people reported that they had used their naloxone, 22% reported that they gave it away to someone, and 15.5% reported that they “just wanted or needed more.” 5.3% of people reported that they had lost it and 2.5% of people reported that someone had stole their stuff. 0.9% of people reported that the police confiscated their naloxone.

Reason for refill:

563 responses

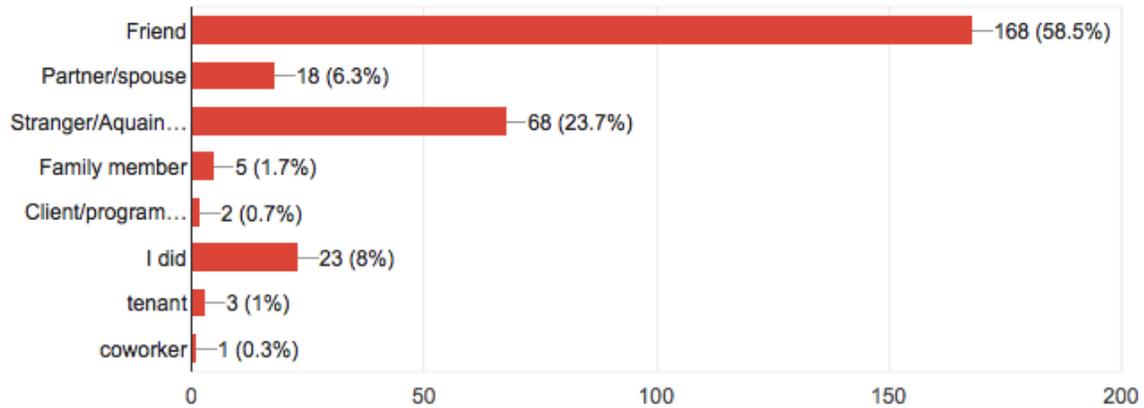


Overdose Information

If clients reported using their naloxone, staff asked who had overdosed. 58.5% of people reported that it was their friend who had overdosed and 23.7% reported that it was a stranger or acquaintance. 8% of people reported that they had overdosed and someone who was present had used their naloxone on them.

Who overdosed?

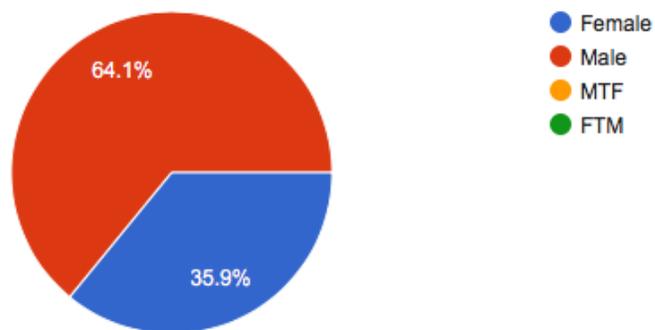
287 responses



The gender of the person who had overdosed was 64.1% male.

Gender of the person who overdosed?

281 responses





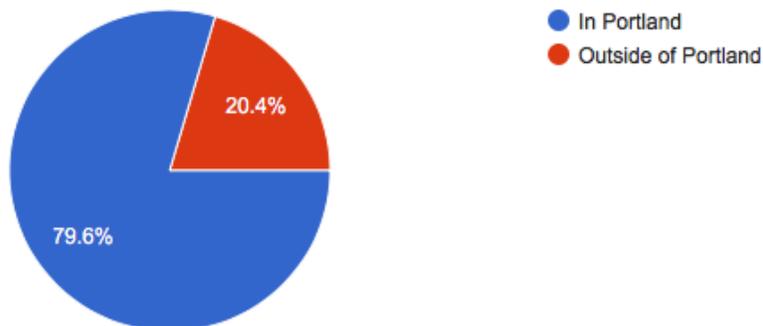
When asked what drugs the person who overdosed had taken, clients were asked to state only the drugs that they were sure of. 92.9% of clients reported that the person had taken heroin, 13.2% of clients reported pharmaceutical opioids, 7.9% reported benzos, and 4.6% reported cocaine/crack. At the 6-month point in data collection a discrete category for “Fentanyl” was added; for the last 6-months of the year, 20% of clients reported that the person who overdosed had taken fentanyl. This was confirmed by the client’s report of the overdose, field testing by law enforcement or positive urine testing at a medical setting. Throughout the entire year there were a small number of reports that also included methadone, buprenorphine, alcohol, methamphetamine, spice, and gabapentin (generic name for Neurontin). Anecdotally, gabapentin use has steadily increased among Portland Needle Exchange clients since 2015.

Clients were asked where the overdose had taken place. 59.9% reported in a private house or apartment, 14.4% reported on the street/alley/camp, 8.8% reported in a car, 6.7% reported in or around the shelter, 3.5% reported in a public park, 2.1% reported in a public bathroom, and 1.8% reported in a hotel.

Location

Where did the overdose take place?

284 responses



79.6% of overdose reversals were reported in Portland. The remaining 20.4% of overdose reversals were reported throughout Maine and towns in Massachusetts and New Hampshire.

Responding To The Overdose

Clients were asked what they did during the overdose reversal in addition to giving naloxone:

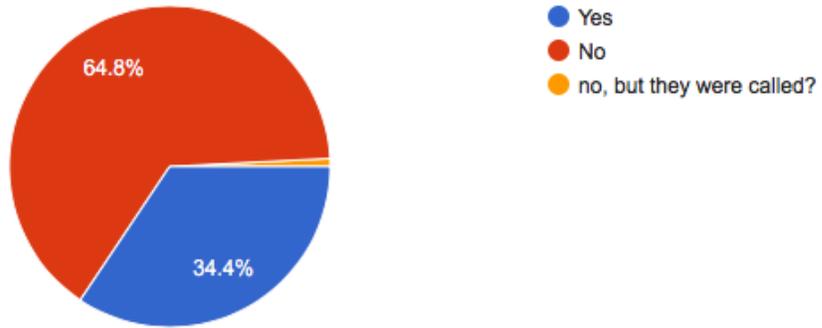
- 43.7% performed a sternum rub
- 32.6% called 911
- 28.3% performed rescue breathing
- 9% performed chest compressions

When asked, "Were EMS present at the overdose?" 64.8% of clients responded "no." This is consistent with the previous question that only about 1/3 of people reported having called 911. One client reported that EMS was not present even though they were called.



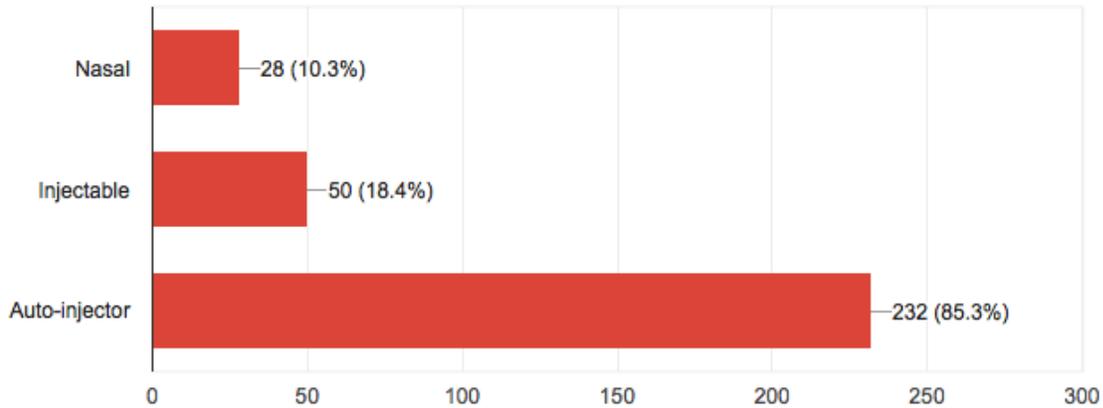
Were EMS present at the overdose?

125 responses



What kind of narcan was used?

272 responses

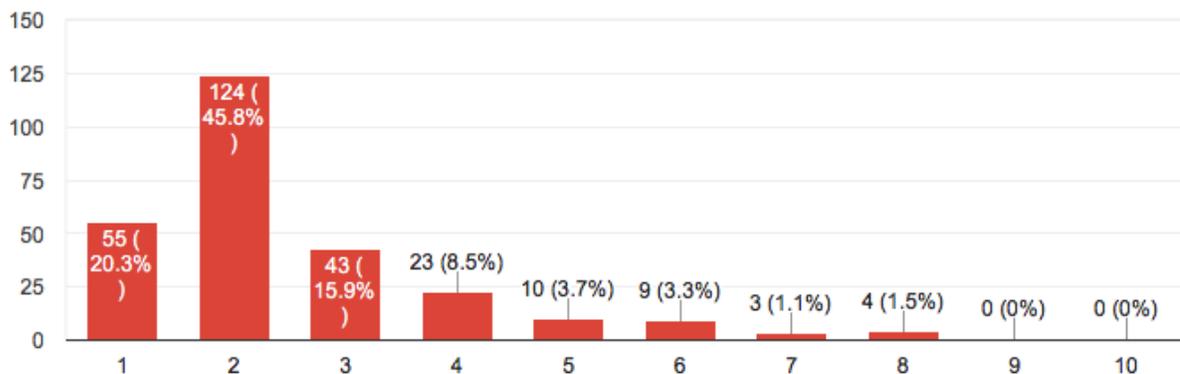


The majority of clients administered naloxone intramuscularly using an auto-injector.

When asked about the number of doses administered, 45.8% administered 2 doses, 20.3% administered 1 dose, 15.9% administered 3 doses, 8.5% administered 4 doses, and the remaining 9.5% administered 5 or more doses.

How many total doses were used?

271 responses





Clients were asked how long it took for the naloxone to work. 45% of clients reported that it took over 5 minutes, 31.8% of clients reported that it took 3-5 minutes, 14% of clients reported that it took 1-3 minutes, and 6.2% reported that it took less than 1 minute.

Harassment

Clients were asked about their experiences interacting with EMS and the police when they were administering naloxone or present at the overdose. 1 client reported arrest of overdosing person or witness, 4 clients reported harassment by paramedics or the fire department, and 4 clients reported harassment by the police. The reported arrest was a client who was on bail conditions and “was not supposed to be around drugs.” For one client who experienced harassment by the police, they shared that the police had threatened them saying “if you are here next time he overdoses we are throwing you in jail.” Another client reported that she was mocked by the paramedics for knowing how to respond to the overdose. Although these experiences were limited, they reveal some of the challenges that drug users still face when administering naloxone and reversing overdoses.

Plans for 2018

Naloxone distribution and data collection will continue for 2018. There have been some changes to the type of naloxone available in the Portland Needle Exchange and those changes may affect rates of distribution. The company that donates auto-injectors has discontinued the 0.4 mg preparation and only offers a 2 mg preparation, which is a very high dose and not appropriate for opiate-dependant individuals. Because of this, staff at the Portland Needle Exchange will be switching to injectable naloxone administered with a syringe, which is a type the program has always stocked, but the auto-injectors were the preferred type by most clients and community members.



This report was compiled by Zoe Odlin-Platz and Anna McConnell, February 2018.