

Meigs County Health Department Public Health Nursing Harm Reduction Services Report for 2024

2024 marked ten years that the Meigs County Health Department (MCHD) has offered expanded harm reduction services. According to SAMHSA (2024), harm reduction is an evidence-based approach that is critical to engaging with people who use drugs and equipping them with life-saving tools and information to create positive change in their lives and potentially save their lives. The MCHD's Public Health Nurses (PHNs) are trained to provide individuals and groups on Naloxone/Narcan use in the event of a suspected opioid overdose. During 2024, this staff consisted of Leanne Cunningham, BSN, RN, Director of Nursing, Angella Rosler, BSN, RN, Complex Medical Help Program PHN, Michelle Marcum, BSN, RN, PHN (January-July) and Jessica Davis, BSN, RN, PHN (September-December) who collectively trained 145 people to use Naloxone with 143 kits issued to community members and 55 issued to first responders. Group trainings were facilitated at agencies and businesses who requested the training, including: Meigs County Probate Court, Meigs County District Public Library, and the Meigs County Courthouse. Nurses attended several events where Naloxone was distributed, including: Carleton School Health Fair, Lost Voices Recovery Walk, Kid's Day Prevention Day at the Meigs County Fair, Farmers Bank Kids' Bash, No Wrong Door training, and the Meigs County Department of Job & Family Services Child Abuse Prevention Awareness Month Kid-Palooza.

Additional harm reduction strategies were adopted during 2024. One strategy was the placement of five emergency access NaloxBoxes within Meigs County. These sites include the Meigs County Drug Court (Meigs County Courthouse) and the four Meigs County District Public Library sites--Pomeroy, Middleport, Racine and Eastern. Site staff within each site have been trained to use Naloxone should an overdose occur onsite. We anticipate being able to add more NaloxBox sites every year as the Ohio Department of Health supplies the units without cost to the local health departments.

During Spring 2024, we were able to also add the issuance of Fentanyl Test Strips (FTS) to those who need them. These are given out in batches of five at a time, and people who use drugs can use them to test the drug for Fentanyl before it is

used. These can be a very useful tool in the effort to reduce Fentanyl related overdoses as data shows that an astounding 80% of overdoses are related to Fentanyl being laced into other drugs, including marijuana. Forty strips were distributed during 2024.

If you have a family member or friend who uses illicit drugs, or have a family member who is prescribed opioids, we encourage you to be trained to use and carry Naloxone. If your business or agency is interested in hosting a Naloxone training, or if you need Naloxone, please call 740-992-6626 and ask to speak to a public health nurse.

Leanne Cunningham
Director of Nursing

