

**VA**U.S. Department  
of Veterans Affairs

# News Release

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Media RelationsWashington, DC 20420  
(202) 461-7600  
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## VA equips 200,000 Veterans with lifesaving naloxone

The U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs' (VA) [Opioid Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution](#) (OEND) program announced that from May 2014 to September 2019, the program issued naloxone — a medication used to block the effects of a potentially fatal opioid overdose — to more than 200,000 Veterans.

VA is a leader in naloxone distribution to health care patients and has documented more than 700 successful opioid overdose reversals resulting from its use.

“Veterans are twice as likely to die from accidental overdose compared to the general U.S. population,” said VA Secretary Robert Wilkie. “Given the opioid crisis, it is our duty to do everything we can to help Veterans avoid opioid overdose and thanks to the [Comprehensive Addiction and Recovery Act of 2016](#), naloxone education and naloxone prescriptions are free to Veterans enrolled for VA care who may be at-risk of opioid overdose.”

VA's OEND program takes a multidisciplinary approach which educates vulnerable patients about opioid risk and provides them with naloxone. VA has also standardized [patient](#) and [provider](#) education, clinical guidance, clinical decision support tools identifying patients in danger of an overdose and national clinical notes to improve care post-overdose.

The department recently launched a [Rapid Naloxone Initiative](#) consisting of three elements, including, OEND, VA Police Naloxone and Automated External Defibrillator (AED) cabinet naloxone.

One hundred sixteen facilities have equipped 2,785 police officers with naloxone and 56 facilities have placed naloxone in 693 AED cabinets, with 126 opioid overdose reversals (120 by VA Police and 6 with AED cabinet naloxone).

OEND is one of many initiatives VA has implemented to address the opioid epidemic. VA's [Opioid Safety Initiative](#) has made significant progress reducing reliance on opioid medication for pain management by more than 53% since 2012 and offers [pain care options](#) that are safer and more effective in the long run such as [yoga, acupuncture, tai chi and behavioral health approaches](#).

VA also offers specialty [substance use disorder treatment](#) at every health care system using evidence-based psychosocial treatments and medications to effectively treat opioid use disorders and other substance use disorders.

Here's information about [VA's OEND](#) efforts and resources.

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