



NEWS RELEASE

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Vaya Health, Henderson County law enforcement agencies partner to reduce opioid overdoses

ASHEVILLE, N.C. – Henderson County law enforcement agencies are now better equipped to prevent fatal opioid drug overdoses through a partnership with Vaya Health.

Vaya, an Asheville-based public managed care organization, distributed 124 kits containing the overdose-reversal medication NARCAN last Wednesday to the Henderson County Sheriff's Office. Vaya provided another 40 kits on Thursday to the Hendersonville Police Department.

Each kit contains two doses of NARCAN (naloxone) nasal spray, which can reverse the effect of an overdose of opioids such as heroin or prescription painkillers. Each kit also contains a pharmacist's standing order allowing public distribution, instructions and information on local substance use treatment resources.

"We are grateful for our partnership with Vaya Health and this timely, lifesaving gift," said Henderson County Sheriff Lowell Griffin. "Sadly, our deputies, first responders and even detention officers deal with overdoses each week. Our hope is that a deputy or first responder arrives in time to use NARCAN to reverse the effects of an overdose and save a person's life.

"A successful intervention with NARCAN may just be the last encounter a person needs to receive help to break the horrible addiction of substance use before it's too late," he said.

Statewide, drug overdoses now claim more lives each year than motor vehicle crashes, according to the N.C. Department of Health and Human Services.

"Our officers have used NARCAN six times recently to help save lives in our jurisdiction," said Hendersonville Police Chief Herbert Blake. "Vaya Health is a significant supplier in helping us in our efforts to better serve our community members. We are thankful to Vaya, as are individuals who have survived an overdose, their relatives and loved ones."

According to the N.C. Harm Reduction Coalition, lay individuals alone have used naloxone to reverse opioid overdoses nearly 14,000 times since 2013 in North Carolina.

"Naloxone is preventing deaths in Henderson County and throughout western North Carolina," said Vaya CEO Brian Ingraham. "Research has found that making naloxone available *does not* encourage people to use opioids more. An overdose reversal could be the first step toward recovery. Each kit contains information to connect overdose survivors to local treatment services."

In North Carolina, naloxone is also available to the public at participating pharmacies. For more information, visit www.naloxonesaves.org.

Vaya encourages any western North Carolina resident seeking help for a substance use issue to call Vaya's toll-free, 24/7 Access to Care Line at 1-800-849-6127. The line is answered by behavioral health professionals who can connect callers to local treatment services or provide help in crisis. In a life-threatening situation such as an overdose, always call 911.

About Vaya Health

Based in Asheville, N.C., Vaya Health manages public funds for mental health, substance use disorder and intellectual or developmental disability services in 23 western North Carolina counties: Alexander, Alleghany, Ashe, Avery, Buncombe, Caldwell, Cherokee, Clay, Graham, Haywood, Henderson, Jackson, Macon, Madison, McDowell, Mitchell, Polk, Rutherford, Swain, Transylvania, Watauga, Wilkes and Yancey. Access to care and crisis assistance are available 24/7 at 1-800-849-6127. Learn more at www.vayahealth.com.

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