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Chatham Health District and Local EMS Providers to Pilot a Naloxone Leave-Behind Program

Chatham Health District (CHD) is excited to announce the launch of a Naloxone Leave-Behind Program. Through a partnership between CHD, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (DPH), and local Emergency Medical Services (EMS), this program will complement other statewide and local harm-reduction efforts by arming more residents with the opioid reversal drug, Naloxone. Under Statewide EMS Protocol section 6.9, EMS providers may leave behind a Naloxone Overdose Prevention Kit with the patient, family, friends, or bystanders following suspected opioid overdose calls. Under this program, Chatham Health District will be supplying kits to local EMS for that purpose.

“Unfortunately, one of the single greatest predictors of a future opioid overdose is recently having experienced an opioid overdose” Director of Health, Russell Melmed, said. *“Leaving a kit behind with the medicine needed to reverse a future opioid overdose can save lives.”*

Under the Leave-Behind Program, EMS will leave behind a kit that includes 2 x 4mg doses of Naloxone, a CPR shield, gloves, and information on how to access other harm reduction or substance use disorder treatment services. EMS will also provide instructions on how to administer a dose of Naloxone in the event that a suspected opioid overdose has occurred.

“The Colchester Hayward Fire Department has linked up with the Chatham Health District to provide these essential prevention kits that are left behind by EMS providers.” Colchester Fire Department Chief, Steve Hoffman, said. *“This will put the needed medication in the hands of the of the public in an effort to reverse the effect of an opioid overdose. This is a great opportunity for us to work with a community partner to be proactive in reducing the opioid overdose deaths that occur. We want to still ensure that those who have and use these kits still contact 911 immediately. This is not a replacement for contacting 911, but an effort to administer the needed medication prior to EMS arrival to reverse the effects quickly and enhance survival rates.”*

The initial supply of kits was provided by DPH, with CHD deciding that piloting a leave-behind program was the best way to target those at highest risk of a future opioid overdose. After a kit is left behind, the EMS provider reports to the Connecticut Poison Control Center, and CHD monitors and reports regional metrics associated with the program. If the pilot is successful, CHD will seek funding to purchase additional kits to continue the program.

“What we are witnessing is a shift in the paradigm of how critical public health initiatives are administered, beginning with front-line EMS personnel.” Tomasz Michalewski, Portland EMS Chief, said. *“Having bore witness to countless avoidable deaths over the years, these dedicated and knowledgeable professionals now have tools to pass along directly to the public at the scene of these incidents so as to help prevent future tragedies, as our communities continue to recover from the opioid epidemic.”*