

CITY OF BALTIMORE

STEPHANIE RAWLINGS-BLAKE, Mayor



HEALTH DEPARTMENT

Leana S. Wen, M.D., M.Sc., FAAEM
Commissioner of Health
1001 E. Fayette St.
Baltimore, MD 21202
health.baltimorecity.gov
Tel: 410-396-4398

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Dear Emergency Department Colleagues,

I am writing to ask for your help on a critical public health emergency. In 2015, Baltimore City had an alarming increase in fentanyl-related overdose deaths. **In October alone, there were 14 deaths related to fentanyl- a 133% increase over the previous year.** The Police Department and DEA also report an increase in fentanyl-laced heroin drug trafficking in Baltimore City.

We know that many people at risk for fentanyl overdose are seen in your ED, sometimes even days before their death. EDs play a key role in preventing deaths from overdose, and we need your assistance to combat this epidemic. We ask for your help with these 3 best practices:

1. **Prescribe naloxone for patients and their families.** Our Baltimore best practices include naloxone for every patient who presents with opioid use disorder or who is being prescribed opioids. We are providing every ED with a pre-written prescription for naloxone for providers to use. These prescriptions should be used by EDs that have not yet incorporated naloxone into their Electronic Medical Records.
2. **Refer patients to the Crisis Information and Referral Line (CI&R Line).** The Health Department is providing every ED with magnets and cards for physicians, nurses, and social workers who want to refer patients to Baltimore's 24/7 hotline **410-433-5175** to get help with substance use treatment. The magnet can be a quick reference tool for providers and the card can be given to patients.
3. **Talk to your patients about overdose prevention.** You may use the Emergency Department Pocket Guide to Prevent Opioid Overdose Deaths. This brief guide for physicians, nurses and staff provides information on who is at highest risk for an opioid overdose, naloxone, and how to refer and to speak with patients regarding substance use treatment.

Please speak with your ED Chair for information about where these materials are located in your facility. If you have any questions about Baltimore City's overdose prevention efforts, please contact Joneigh Khaldun, Chief Medical Officer, at Joneigh.khaldun@baltimorecity.gov.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent issue. With your help, we can save the lives of our City's residents.

Sincerely,

Leana S. Wen, M.D. M.Sc. FAAEM
Commissioner of Health
Baltimore City Health Department

Joneigh Khaldun, M.D. M.P.H.
Chief Medical Officer
Baltimore City Health Department