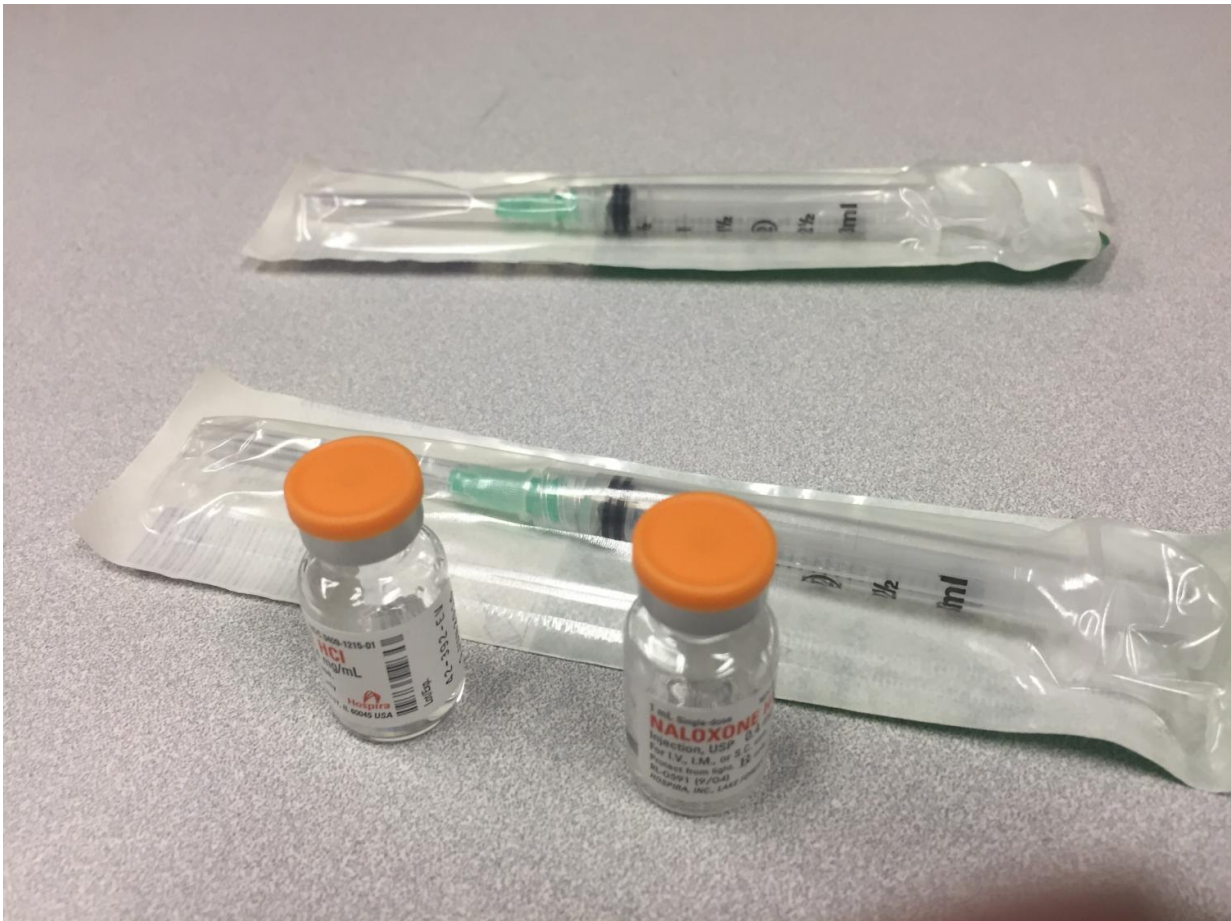


Fear of arrest stops some needed calls to 911 after opioid overdose is administered

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The contents of Naloxone kit. Credit: IU Communications

Fear of being arrested still undercuts an Indiana law that shields anyone

who administers naloxone from criminal charges, according to a survey conducted by two researchers at Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. Naloxone is a lifesaving emergency antidote for opioid overdose.

Approximately 73 percent of survey respondents said 911 was called after [naloxone](#) was administered for an overdose, but 27 percent of respondents indicated 911 was not called, according to Dennis Watson, an associate professor in the Indiana University Richard M. Fairbanks School of Public Health, and Bradley Ray, an assistant professor in the IU School of Public and Environmental Affairs, both at IUPUI.

Watson and Ray said their research shows that people don't call 911 because they are afraid of being arrested.

"There is a possibility this fear may translate to death if the naloxone dose provided is not strong enough to completely counteract the opioids in the person's system," Ray and Watson wrote in a recent blog post.

"A person could look perfectly fine, get up and walk away, and then go into overdose again 30 minutes later," Watson said.

Under Aaron's Law, anyone may legally obtain naloxone—also known by the brand name Narcan—and administer it. Naloxone can be obtained through a standing order that allows pharmacies to dispense it to the public.

Part of the reason Aaron's Law exists is to make sure people receive the care they need without fear of arrest, Ray said: "This is a [public health](#) problem, not a criminal justice problem.

"Naloxone is an incredible, lifesaving substance, and if you use it to save someone's life, you should get a round of applause, not worry about a

night in jail," Ray said.

The two IUPUI researchers said additional educational efforts are needed to inform the public about Aaron's Law and naloxone. These efforts should focus on the general public but also be directed at professionals working in this area, they said.

Naloxone is not intended to replace emergency medical care. Persons who administer it are urged to call 911 for medical help.

This survey is part of an evaluation the researchers have conducted of opioid policies that have been implemented in Indiana since 2013. The evaluation is funded by an \$800,000 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention grant.

Ray and Watson's team placed survey postcards with the naloxone kits that are handed out at local health departments. Among the questions asked on the postcard, which is mailed back to the researchers, is whether 911 was called after naloxone was administered.

The number of deaths from [drug overdoses](#) continues to rise in Marion County. Last year, a record number of people—345—died from drug overdoses in the county. By comparison, on average, 85 people are killed per year in traffic accidents in Marion County.

As of May 1, there have been 130 drug-overdose deaths in Marion County in 2017, compared to 98 deaths that were recorded at the same time last year.

Ray and Watson received a total of 1,281 cards, including 1,197 that were filled out when the person picked up the kit and 84 that were filled out after the kit was used.

The postcard survey initially targeted 20 counties in Indiana. Another 16 counties were recently added to the [survey](#).

Provided by Indiana University

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