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Bill to Prevent Opioid Overdose Deaths Heads to Governor Newsom's Desk

(SACRAMENTO, Calif.) – Law enforcement officials are joining forces with behavioral health advocates, families impacted by overdose, and addiction medicine professionals across the state to urge Governor Gavin Newsom to sign [Senate Bill 641](#) by Senator Richard Roth (D-Riverside) into law. The legislation, co-sponsored by the California Association of Alcohol and Drug Program Executives (CAADPE), the Alexander Neville Foundation, and Riverside County Sheriff Chad Bianco will help ensure that those who administer overdose reversal medications — including law enforcement, first responders, community organizations, and school personnel — have the best chance of saving lives.

If signed, the bill will expand the list of overdose reversal medications offered through California's Naloxone Distribution Project (NDP) to include newer FDA-approved drugs that help prevent deaths caused by the ever-changing and more deadly types of synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl. Fentanyl now accounts for the vast majority of California's overdose deaths. The proliferation of fentanyl, which is up to 50 times stronger than heroin, has made it increasingly difficult to reverse overdoses with a single Narcan device, so stronger formulations and newer treatments must be made available. Between 2019 and 2021 overdose deaths increased by 121%. Nearly 6,000 Californians succumbed to synthetic opioid overdose between 2019 and 2022.

"California's fentanyl epidemic demands a comprehensive, every-tool-in-the-toolbelt approach. This plague is killing our kids, and we must urgently treat this problem. That's why I authored Senate Bill 641 to ensure that California's Naloxone Distribution Project makes all FDA-approved opioid reversal tools available to law enforcement, first responders, community organizations, schools, and local health agencies," said Roth. "I am heartened at the overwhelming support this legislation has received from my colleagues in both houses of the Legislature, and I thank them for it."

Created in 2018, the NDP provides eligible applicants with the overdose reversal drug naloxone at no cost. Since its inception, the NDP has been credited with preventing nearly 182,000 opioid overdose deaths in California. It has become increasingly clear that the NDP needs updating as more deadly and complex types of synthetic opioids like fentanyl are increasingly being mixed with recreational drugs like cannabis, cocaine, and other stimulants, placing a larger population unknowingly at risk of opioid overdose.

“This legislation is a beacon of hope in our battle against the devastating opioid epidemic,” said Al Senella, Board President of CAADPE. “By signing SB 641 into law, Governor Newsom will help ensure that fewer families receive that dreaded phone call telling them their loved one has succumbed to an opioid overdose.”

About CAADPE

Established in 1989, CAADPE member agencies provide substance use disorder treatment services at over 300 sites in California. CAADPE is the only statewide Association representing all types of substance use disorder treatment programs in California. <http://www.caadpe.org>

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