

Mapping Naloxone Access in Colorado

A toolkit for creating a comprehensive statewide naloxone access map

About this toolkit

This toolkit was developed by a team at the Injury and Violence Prevention Center at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus with the goal of improving public access to naloxone, which is a safe, FDA-approved medication that can reverse an opioid overdose when administered in time. The team developed a comprehensive, statewide map of where naloxone is available in Colorado, with a focus on free community resources such as kiosks and vending machines.

This toolkit provides practical information to help other states or organizations make a similar map, including:

- the rationale for creating a map
- how to identify distribution sites
- step-by-step instructions for building a naloxone access map

It is designed to support organizations like public health departments, harm reduction agencies, academic programs, opioid abatement councils, and other groups that are seeking to improve naloxone access and visibility in their communities.

While several naloxone finder tools exist at the state and national level, many focus exclusively on pharmacies or cover only specific regions. The goal of this project was to create a comprehensive map in Colorado by aggregating data from multiple existing

sources and supplementing it with original, county-by-county information. This toolkit documents our methods so that other states and regions can replicate and adapt this approach. This toolkit is not intended to provide medical or legal guidance.

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An introduction to naloxone and overdose prevention

Drug overdose is a leading cause of death in the United States, especially for adults 18-44 years old. Naloxone (commonly known by the brand name Narcan) is a medication that can rapidly reverse an opioid overdose. It works by blocking the effects of opioids on the brain and restoring normal breathing. Naloxone is safe, effective, and has no potential for abuse. It can be administered as a nasal spray or injection. Naloxone nasal spray is available over the counter nationwide.

Why naloxone access matters

Opioid-involved overdose deaths have remained dramatically high over the past two decades. Fentanyl and other synthetic opioids now account for the majority of overdose fatalities. Naloxone is the only medication that can reverse an opioid overdose in progress, but **it must be available and accessible at the moment it is needed**. Expanding community access to naloxone is an evidence-based strategy endorsed by the Surgeon General, the CDC, the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), and numerous state and local health departments. Colorado, like much of the nation, has experienced a high number of opioid-related overdose

deaths. Understanding the scope of the crisis provides context for why comprehensive naloxone mapping is essential.

Key statistics

- Colorado experienced between 1,500 and 2,000 drug overdose deaths a year in recent years, with opioids involved in the majority of cases.
- Fentanyl has become the primary driver of opioid-related overdose fatalities in Colorado, surpassing heroin and prescription opioids.
- Overdose deaths affect every region of Colorado, though rates vary significantly by county. Rural and frontier communities often face compounding challenges including limited access to treatment, fewer harm reduction resources, and longer emergency response times.
- Disparities in overdose rates exist across racial and ethnic groups, with American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN) and Black communities disproportionately affected.

The role of naloxone in overdose prevention

Naloxone distribution programs have been shown to reduce overdose mortality in communities where they are implemented. A key challenge, however, is ensuring that naloxone is available where and when it is needed most. **Many community members and bystanders are willing to administer naloxone but may not know where to obtain it.** Online maps showing naloxone distribution sites are an intervention designed to address this gap by connecting individuals with local access points.

Maps of naloxone access points serve multiple audiences:

- individuals who use opioids
- friends and family members
- healthcare providers
- social workers
- first responders
- community members who want to be prepared to help in an emergency

The creation of a comprehensive, statewide map can also help public health officials and policymakers identify gaps in coverage and direct resources to underserved areas.

How naloxone is distributed

Naloxone reaches communities through a variety of channels, each with its own benefits and limitations:

- **Kiosks and Vending Machines:** Naloxone dispensing vending machines and/or kiosks placed in accessible public or semi-public locations (such as libraries, community centers, and health clinics) provide free, often anonymous access to naloxone, sometimes even 24/7. These are among the most accessible distribution methods.
 - **By Request:** Some organizations including but not limited to those with kiosks or vending machines (e.g., libraries and community centers) offer free naloxone, upon request. Other organizations offer naloxone as a standard part of services provided (e.g., harm reduction agencies). Similar to many kiosk locations, access may be limited to building or business hours and require interaction with staff.
 - **Mobile Outreach:** Some organizations operate mobile harm reduction units with rotating schedules and locations, distributing naloxone and other supplies directly in the community.
 - **Pharmacies:** Pharmacies sell naloxone over the counter (OTC) without a prescription. However, cost can be a barrier; a two-dose package of naloxone nasal spray can cost approximately \$30-\$50 depending on retailer and whether the buyer chooses branded Narcan or a store-brand generic.
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Existing naloxone access resources in Colorado

Before building the Save a Life Colorado Naloxone Access map, the IVPC team conducted a thorough review of existing resources that list or map naloxone distribution sites within Colorado. This review revealed that while several useful tools exist, existing statewide resources are either pharmacy-focused, limited to specific program types, or structured as referral tables that link out to county pages rather than

providing mappable addresses and hours. None presents free naloxone access points as a searchable, filterable map. The following table summarizes the major existing resources in Colorado.

RESOURCE	COVERAGE	DESCRIPTION	URL / SOURCE	LIMITATIONS
Stop the Clock Colorado	Statewide	Interactive map of pharmacies offering naloxone OTC	stoptheclockcolorado.org/map	Pharmacy-focused
CDPHE Harm Reduction Sites	Statewide	List of syringe access and harm reduction programs	cdphe.colorado.gov/reducing-infections-from-injection-drug-use	Limited to harm reduction programs
Lift The Label / BHA	Statewide	Free naloxone sources from the Behavioral Health Administration	liftthelabel.org/naloxone	Referral table; most cells link out to county pages rather than giving addresses and hours
Addiction Response Team (North Colorado Health Alliance): Reversal Project	Northern Colorado (Larimer and Weld counties)	Map of harm reduction kiosks and vending machines	Google Maps custom map	Limited to Northern Colorado region
Narcan-Finder.com	Partial (CO)	National directory listing some Colorado organizations distributing free naloxone	narcan-finder.com	Last updated in 2023
County or regional-specific websites and resources	County-level	Individual county or regional websites listing local naloxone resources	Various	information spread across many websites

How to find potential naloxone distribution sites

Building a comprehensive naloxone access map involved a systematic, multi-pronged approach to identifying distribution sites. The team used the following methods to build the most complete picture possible.

1. START WITH EXISTING SOURCES

The team began by compiling data from all known existing maps, lists, and directories. IVPC recommends these steps:

- Review existing statewide and regional naloxone finder tools (see the previous section for examples of resources found in Colorado).
- Review and contact your state health department for lists of organizations receiving naloxone through bulk purchase or distribution programs.
- Check harm reduction organization directories and syringe access program registries.
- Review the Behavioral Health Administration (or equivalent state agency) for funded naloxone distribution programs.

2. CONDUCT SYSTEMATIC WEB SEARCHES

The team conducted extensive internet searches at multiple geographic levels. IVPC recommends these steps:

- **Statewide searches:** Search for key terms such as "free naloxone [state]," "naloxone kiosk [state]," and "naloxone vending machine [state]" to identify programs that may not appear in existing directories.
- **County-by-county searches:** For each county in the state, search "[County name] naloxone" to identify local programs. This county-by-county approach was critical for identifying resources in less populous communities that are not

captured by statewide tools.

- **City-level searches:** For larger cities, search "[City name] naloxone" to identify urban harm reduction organizations, mobile outreach programs, and kiosk locations that may operate independently of county-level programs.

The following are types of naloxone distribution sites to consider:

- Stand-alone naloxone kiosks and/or vending machines
- Public health departments
- Harm reduction organizations
- Libraries
- Police / Sheriff's departments
- Mobile outreach programs
- Universities
- Community centers / shelters
- Hospitals, emergency departments, or clinics

A standardized set of variables was collected for each naloxone distribution site to ensure consistency and utility for map users. The following table (next page) describes each variable and how it was determined.

VARIABLE	DESCRIPTION
Name	The name of the organization or site distributing naloxone.
Price	Categorized as Free, Unclear, or Not Free. For Unclear, a user would need to contact the organization. For Not Free, the user would pay the over the counter price.
Distribution Method	Categorize as useful, such as kiosk, vending machine, by request, mobile outreach, etc.
Address	Physical address of the distribution site.
Email	Contact email for the organization, if available.
Phone	Contact phone number for the organization, if available.
Hours of Operation	Listed hours, if available. Marked as Unclear when not posted online.
Link to Site	URL for the organization's website or relevant webpage.
County	The county in which the site is located.

3. ENGAGE LOCAL AND REGIONAL PARTNERS

Once you have identified potential naloxone distribution sites through your research, it is time to reach out to validate the information and identify additional sites that may not appear online. In Colorado, Regional Opioid Abatement Councils (ROACs) were key partners in validating and supplementing the research.

PEOPLE AND ORGANIZATIONS TO REACH OUT TO:

- Opioid abatement councils or task forces at the state, regional, or county level
- Local public health departments (county and city level)
- Hospital and health system partners
- Substance use prevention coalitions
- University and academic partners with harm reduction expertise
- Harm reduction agencies and recovery organizations
- Nonprofit organizations focused on substance use, recovery, or community health
- Community resource centers (food banks, shelters, libraries)

For each contact, confirm:

- if naloxone is available
- if it is free
- the method of distribution (kiosk, by request, etc.)
- hours of availability
- if the organization/business is willing to list its location on a public map

The IVPC team conducted its outreach to Regional Opioid Abatement Council (ROAC) leads via email with an attached spreadsheet of preliminary findings for their region, asking them to review and identify any missing sites and correct information about availability.

Building a naloxone access map

Building a custom map in Google Maps is free and accessible. Once you have a list of sites to include, you can add them to a custom map that can be publicly shared on the web or embedded in another website.

HOW TO CREATE A GOOGLE MAP

1. Create a Google account for the project (e.g., "NaloxoneMapColorado@gmail.com").
2. While signed into the Google account, navigate to the "My Maps" page

(mymaps.google.com).

3. Click "Create a new map."

4. Go to the top left and click "Untitled map" to create a name for your map. Add a description.

5. To add distribution locations, use the search bar in the top middle of the map. Once you have found the correct location, click the result on the map, then click "Add to map." For places with no search result, use the "Add marker" tool.

6. Once a location is added, navigate to the control panel. By clicking on the paint can next to the location name, you can change the color and icon displayed for this location.

7. Separate different location types (e.g., kiosks, public health departments, harm reduction organizations) into specific layers and name them accordingly. This allows users to filter by type.

8. You can change the base map view by clicking the Down Arrow next to "Base map" in the bottom of the left panel.

9. To preview the map, click Preview.

10. Once finalized, change the permissions from "Private" to "Public" before posting or embedding the map. In the control panel, select "Share" and set General access to "Anyone with the link" (role: Viewer), or to "Public" if the map should be discoverable in search.

11. Use "Copy link" in the sharing dialog to get the map URL.

12. To embed the map in a webpage, make the map public first, then open the left panel and select "Share" or the three-dot menu, and click "Embed on my site."

13. Rather than adding sites one at a time, import them in bulk from a spreadsheet. Click "Add layer," name it, then click "Import" and upload a CSV, TSV, XLSX, Google Sheet, KML, KMZ, or GPX file. Choose the column holding the address or lat/long and the column holding the marker title.

OTHER MAPPING PLATFORMS

Other platforms, including those maintained by Esri (such as ArcGIS) or Tableau, are also available for creating these types of maps. Many health departments and academic institutions have access to these tools, however, they require specific training and licensing.

Maintenance of the naloxone map

Once your naloxone access map is built and publicly available, ongoing maintenance is essential to ensure accuracy and relevance. Plan for the following:

- **Responding to inquiries:** What contact information is provided for users or sites to request changes to their listing? Include this on the map website. If using an organizational email, designate someone to monitor it regularly.
 - **Updating listings:** Who will make updates to the map when sites are added, removed, or their information is changed? Will regular outreach be conducted to verify listings, or will you rely on sites to notify you of changes?
 - **Web hosting and maintenance:** What organization hosts the website where the map is embedded? Consider annual costs for hosting, domain registration, and maintenance.
 - **Outreach and marketing:** What outreach and marketing will you do to promote the map? Who will respond to media inquiries?
 - **Plan for change:** Naloxone distribution programs change frequently as new kiosks are installed, grant-funded programs launch or end, and organizations update their services. Plan for periodic (at least quarterly) review of all listings.
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Contact us

For questions about this toolkit, please contact the Injury and Violence Prevention Center at the University of Colorado Anschutz Medical Campus: ivpc@cuanschutz.edu
