



**Boston Public Health Commission
Health Advisory**

OPIOID OVERDOSES INCREASE CITYWIDE

The Boston Public Health Commission (BPHC) and Boston Emergency Medical Services have seen a marked increase in suspected opioid-related overdoses throughout the City of Boston in recent days. The Boston Police Drug Unit is aware of this increase in suspected overdoses and is investigating. Officers have conducted controlled buys of drugs sold on Boston streets to test the potency and composition -- a practice that takes place regularly. Tests are ongoing and BPD continues to process outstanding samples. Current samples have not indicated more potency or drugs laced with particular potentially-fatal substances; however the City will continue to actively monitor this situation.

The recent events in Boston require that our partners in the treatment community remain vigilant.

The abuse of illicit and prescription drugs continues to be a major issue in Boston, with high levels of abuse and deaths associated with opioids. As of December 22nd, 761 individuals suspected of narcotic overdose have been administered Narcan by Boston EMS, Boston Fire personnel, trained family members, and clinicians since the beginning of the year compared to 499 times for the same period in 2013.

BPHC encourages emergency departments and emergency response services, health care providers, substance abuse treatment providers, public safety first responders, and the general public to **exercise increased vigilance in promptly identifying suspected overdose patients** and taking appropriate action. Signs and symptoms of an overdose include: unconsciousness or unresponsiveness; respiratory depression or arrest; cyanosis; vomiting; and pinpoint pupils. Immediately dial 911 if you suspect an individual is overdosing.

The Good Samaritan Law provides protection to people who call 911 to report drug overdoses. This law is intended to encourage people to report drug overdoses as soon as possible, even if drugs are present at the scene.

The BPHC's Overdose Prevention and Narcan distribution program trains opioid users and their families, providers and first responders on how to prevent, recognize, and intervene during an opioid overdose using nasal Narcan. Providers and residents interested in overdose prevention training can contact the BPHC Overdose Prevention Program at 617-534-3968. For a list of upcoming training sessions held at the BPHC Finland Building in the South End and for additional information on the Narcan Program, visit bphc.org/Narcan.