

June 2018 Update: Your Professional Duties around Take Home Naloxone Kits

This clarification statement is an update to the article in the Summer 2018 Advocate v. 43(2) pp 12-13.

The Government Organization Act identifies the administration of an injection as a restricted activity. Social workers are not among the regulated health professionals who are authorized to perform this restricted activity (Social Workers Profession Regulation, Alta Reg 82/2003).

This update specifically addresses the teaching of this restricted activity, as well as the emergency exception to performing a restricted activity.

As the regulatory body for the profession of social work in Alberta, the Alberta College of Social Workers (ACSW) acknowledges the important role and contribution of Registered Social Workers in response to the opioid crisis and the potential for social workers to be involved in emergency situations. The ACSW confirms that Registered Social Workers are permitted to become trained, knowledgeable, and competent in the distribution of overdose response kits (take home naloxone kits), including the training of others to administer Naloxone injections for emergency treatment of opioid overdose outside of a hospital setting as per Alberta Health Services protocols.

Additionally, the Government Organization Act provides an exception to performing restricted activities in the case of emergency. It permits a person, who is not otherwise authorized, to perform a restricted activity in order to provide physical comfort, stabilize another person who is ill, injured or unconscious as a result of an accident or other emergency if (a) no authorized individual is available to perform it and (b) no specific compensation is expected or received in relation to the provision or injection of Naloxone. As a result, any person (including an RSW) may inject naloxone when clearly responding to an emergency as defined above.

The ACSW Standards of Practice (2013) provides guidance on limits of practice and adding new services and techniques:

E.4(b) A social worker will limit their practice to areas in which the social worker has gained competence through education, training or supervised experience.

E.4(c) Where a social worker does not have sufficient knowledge/skill/ability to provide a service that is requested, the social worker will (i) develop the competence to complete the task; (ii) decline to act, or (iii) refer to another professional who is competent on that matter.

For more information about naloxone, please visit the AHS Community Based Naloxone Program website:
<https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/page13663.aspx>
or email naloxone.kit@ahs.ca