

Update: Your Professional Duties Around Overdose Response Kits

BY SUZANNE MACKINNON, MSW, RCSW, & SHERYL PEARSON, MSW, RSW, LLB



THIS CLARIFICATION STATEMENT is an update to the article on this topic in the Summer 2018 Advocate.

As the regulatory body for the profession of social work in Alberta, the ACSW acknowledges the important role of registered social workers (RSWs) in responding to the opioid crisis, and the potential



The emergency injection of Naloxone by an RSW who is trained in opioid overdose response would not constitute unprofessional conduct

for social workers to be involved in emergencies. 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).

Registered social workers who have completed the required training may:

- Provide overdose prevention, recognition and response education and training to members of the public.
- Distribute overdose response kits to members of the public who are at risk of overdose or who may witness an overdose.

Registered social workers may not:

- Inject Naloxone, unless doing so clearly falls within the Emergency Exception where: no authorized individual is available to do so themselves; the Naloxone is provided in order to provide physical comfort or stabilize the individual who is ill, injured or unconscious as a result of an accident or other emergency; and no compensation is expected or received by the member.*

- Be involved in the sale of Naloxone or receive compensation in relation to providing Naloxone.

The emergency injection of Naloxone by an RSW who is trained in opioid overdose response would not constitute unprofessional conduct.

It is the responsibility of the RSW to follow their employer’s policies regarding the distribution and use of overdose response kits in the work setting.

* *RSWs employed in health care should be aware that during the course of employment, they may not inject Naloxone.* 🚫



SHERYL PEARSON (top) is a Manager of Regulatory Practice and SUZANNE MACKINNON is the Associate Registrar of the Alberta College of Social Work.

The ACSW Standards of Practice (2013) provide 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 required training and distribution of overdose response kits, please visit the AHS Community Based Naloxone Program website: <https://www.albertahealthservices.ca/info/page13663.aspx> or email naloxone.kit@ahs.ca