



COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
DEPARTMENT OF DRUG AND ALCOHOL PROGRAMS

December 15, 2014

Dear Healthcare Provider,

In September 2014, Act 139 was signed into law. Among other provisions, this statute makes it permissible for healthcare providers to write third party prescriptions for the overdose antidote medication, naloxone. That is to say, an individual who has a family member or loved one who may be at risk of an opioid overdose may obtain a prescription for naloxone in his or her own name to administer to that loved one in the event of an overdose. It is also permissible for pharmacies to fill such prescriptions. In addition to allowing the prescribing and filling of such prescriptions, it allows immunities for physicians who make naloxone accessible to individuals in this manner.

Details about Act 139 can be found at the following website locations:

[www.health.state.pa.us](http://www.health.state.pa.us)

[www.ddap.pa.gov](http://www.ddap.pa.gov)

<http://www.legis.state.pa.us/cfdocs/legis/li/uconsCheck.cfm?yr=2014&sessInd=0&act=139>

The Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs' website also contains educational and awareness materials for those wishing to access and potentially administer naloxone. While it is not necessary for a family member to receive a prescription for naloxone, the website includes an online training for bystanders on how to recognize an opioid overdose and how to administer naloxone. This is not meant to preclude the instruction and information that a family member would obtain from his or her physician or pharmacist.

While the Pennsylvania Department of Health, the Pennsylvania Medical Society, the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, and others have made attempts to disseminate information about Act 139 and its provisions, not every healthcare provider may be aware this new law. For this reason, this letter has been made accessible to members of the public who may need assistance in further clarifying this information to prescribers and pharmacies. Hopefully, this correspondence will serve as a conduit for information sharing and the resources that can be found at the above websites will serve as additional resources as you serve your patients.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read 'Gary Tennis'.

Gary Tennis



March 23, 2015

Dear Healthcare Provider:

While we know others have made attempts to disseminate information about Act 139 of 2014 and its provisions, not every healthcare provider may be aware of this new law and its purpose. Pennsylvania, like the rest of the nation, is currently suffering the worst overdose epidemic in history. To help combat unnecessary loss of life and help save the lives of Pennsylvania’s most vulnerable, the General Assembly enacted Act 139, which became effective on Nov. 29, 2014. This legislation allows first responders, family members and friends the ability to obtain and administer the antidote medication, naloxone – a medication that can reverse an overdose that is caused by an opioid drug, such as a prescription pain medication or heroin.

It’s critical that we have your help and support to ensure that Act 139 is fulfilling its goals and saving lives. Important elements of the legislation that should be of interest to you include:

- Naloxone is safe and legal to prescribe;
- The legislation provides legal immunity for prescribers who make naloxone accessible to individuals; and,
- Physicians, certified registered nurse practitioners, and physicians’ assistants can prescribe the medication to a patient that may need to administer it to another individual.

We understand that this is new legislation and there may still be some confusion about what is permissible and how prescriptions should be written. For this reason, we ask that you please take the time to educate yourself on naloxone and consider it an option when caring for your patients and their loved ones. You can find educational and awareness materials at the following websites:

- [www.health.pa.gov](http://www.health.pa.gov) (Under ‘Hot Topics’ click on Act 139 Naloxone.)
- [www.ddap.pa.gov](http://www.ddap.pa.gov) (Click on the naloxone banner in the center of the home page.)
- [www.prescribetoprevent.org](http://www.prescribetoprevent.org) (guidance on writing prescriptions, stocking, billing, etc.)

Our goal is to alleviate any confusion about this legislation, help answer any questions you may have and continue to work with you as we implement Act 139 in Pennsylvania. We encourage you to share this information with your organization’s physicians. If you have additional questions after reviewing the materials available on the websites, please contact the Department of Health at 1-877-PA-HEALTH. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Karen Murphy, PhD, RN  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Health  
Programs

Rachel Levine, MD  
Acting Physician General  
Department of Health

Gary Tennis  
Acting Secretary  
Department of Drug & Alcohol