

July 27, 2020

Make the Right Call Following an Overdose

WINCHESTER – With the increased availability of the overdose reversal medication naloxone, more lives are being saved following an overdose. Sometimes, however, it takes more than one dose of the medication to revive a person. The Northern Shenandoah Valley Substance Abuse Coalition (NSVSAC) wants to remind residents that following an overdose, the *first* call to make is 911, and the *right* call is to go to the hospital.

Effective July 1, 2020, Virginia’s “Safe Reporting Law” was amended to provide protection from prosecution for drug possession charges for any individual who in good faith seeks or obtains emergency medical attention for himself, if he or she is experiencing an overdose, or for another individual if that individual is experiencing an overdose. The amended law also provides protection from prosecution for drug possession charges for an individual experiencing an overdose if someone calls for medical help. There are additional requirements in the law (the individual must remain on the scene of the overdose, the individual must identify themselves to law



enforcement who respond to the scene, and the evidence was obtained as a result of the call for help), but it is important for individuals to call 911 if they are observing or experiencing an overdose. It is also important for the overdose victim to receive proper medical attention which may include being transported to the hospital for additional observation. If an individual receives one dose of naloxone and the medication wears off, they can go back into overdose. “Calling 911 is important because naloxone can wear off, and an overdose victim should be monitored by medical professionals who can administer additional doses if needed,” says NSVSAC Executive Director Lauren Cummings.

It is also important following an overdose for individuals to be connected to recovery resources. While at the hospital, individuals can inquire about what resources may be available to them.

Making the right call following an overdose can save a life. Remember, the first call is to 911, but the right call—to ensure a life is saved—is to go to the hospital.

About NSVSAC

The Northern Shenandoah Valley Substance Abuse Coalition collaborates with community partners to take the lead in identifying and developing effective resources to ensure that the necessary continuum of care for substance use and addiction services is available to all members of the community in the greater Winchester, Virginia area. Formed in 2014, the Coalition and its public and private sector partners have worked to compassionately reduce the stigma of

addiction, improve access to substance use treatment services and decrease the number of overdoses to combat the opioid epidemic in Virginia. For more information on the Coalition, please visit www.roadtorecovery.info.

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