

Kane County Health Department Aims to Reduce Opioid Deaths by Expanding Access to Proven Medication Treatment

Opioid-related deaths or hospitalizations continue to impact families across the country and Kane County is no different, with more than 2,000 opioid-related overdose visits at Kane County Emergency Departments between 2018 and 2023, based on [state data](#). In response, the Kane County Health Department (KCHD) is working to expand access and knowledge of buprenorphine, an effective and evidence-based medication treatment for opioid use disorder (OUD).

Buprenorphine is an FDA-approved medication that can be prescribed by healthcare providers to help individuals with OUD reduce cravings and withdrawal symptoms. [Research](#) has shown that patients who received medication treatment for their OUD cut their risk of death from all causes in half.

“Expanding access to and growing understanding of buprenorphine in Kane County is a priority for the health department,” said Michael Isaacson, KCHD Executive Director. “Buprenorphine is the evidence-based, gold standard of care for individuals suffering from OUD. It saves lives and reduces the risk of overdose. It’s important for residents who may need support to know where and how to access this help.”

Despite strong evidence of buprenorphine’s effectiveness, the public and some prescribers have a limited understanding of it. KCHD launched a countywide initiative in 2025 to increase local healthcare providers’ knowledge and willingness to prescribe buprenorphine. As part of this initiative, physicians, physician assistants and nurse practitioners participated in a training designed to help them support those with OUD with this proven treatment and receive local support from peers.

The Kane County Health Department has released, “Improving Practitioner Readiness to Prescribe Buprenorphine: Implications for Access to Medications for Opioid Use Disorder in Kane County, IL” a report with the outcomes of this initiative and public health recommendations to expand access and knowledge in the county, including expanding clinical support, strengthening referral networks, and addressing stigma through public education. [Read the full report here.](#)

“Buprenorphine saves lives by giving people who have opioid use disorder a chance at recovery,” said Dr. Diana Bottari of Advocate Health, one of the program’s trainers. “Every person affected by opioid use disorder deserves that chance. Kane County residents who need help with opioid use disorder or have loved ones with opioid use disorder should know that buprenorphine is a safe option for treatment and available throughout Kane County.”

“Every primary care provider and emergency medicine provider should be able to prescribe buprenorphine to patients struggling with opioid use disorder,” said Dr. Stephen Holtsford, another physician trainer. “The medication is safe and saves lives. There is no required training, and there is assistance available [to prescribers] if you need it.”

Any Kane County clinician with Schedule III authority can prescribe buprenorphine.

Residents in Kane County who need support for OUD or other substance use can:

- Visit www.overdoseinfo.org to learn more about opioids, treatment, local resources, and where to get naloxone (opioid overdose-reversing nasal spray) for free, with no prescription or ID.
- Contact Illinois' 24/7 [MAR NOW Hotline](tel:833-234-6343) at 833-234-6343 for medication on-demand.
- Connect with Kane County's information and referral specialist, Toni Garcia, at garciatoni@kanecountyil.gov or 331-312-0060.