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Mississippi Public Health Institute to Train First-Responders to Save Lives in Opioid Epidemic

Jackson, MS—The Mississippi Public Health Institute (MSPHI) was recently awarded grant funding by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) to support training first-responders in administering [naloxone](#), a drug that rapidly reverses an opioid overdose. MSPHI’s mission is to improve public health in Mississippi through community partnerships and evidence-based action. This funding will support MSPHI’s ongoing response to Mississippi’s opioid epidemic by focusing on preventing overdose deaths through equipping first-responders with the tools and training to administer naloxone and prioritize harm reduction interventions.

The federal government recently overhauled its [overdose prevention strategy](#) to prioritize harm reduction policies, which meet people where they are and aim to reduce negative consequences associated with substance use disorder. "We're changing the way we address overdoses," said U.S. Health and Human Services Secretary Xavier Becerra, in a press release. "Our new strategy focuses on people -- putting the very individuals who have struggled with addiction in positions of power."

"We are pleased to receive this grant award and put it towards saving lives in Mississippi. Training our dedicated first-responders to treat opioid overdoses with naloxone is urgently needed in our state. Naloxone is a life-saving drug that [any pharmacist can prescribe.](#)" said Jan Dawson, Program Director, MSPHI. "This grant strengthens our ongoing, multi-sector opioid response program at MSPHI. We look forward to bringing these funds to Mississippi communities torn apart by the opioid epidemic."

At MSPHI, we are seeing firsthand the urgent need to train first-responders in naloxone administration. Opioid overdoses are on the rise as addiction rates soar in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic. We believe training first-responders will have significant impact on saving lives.

This project aims to improve naloxone education and distribution, enhance education and training programs, and improve naloxone utilization. MSPHI relies on partnerships with state agencies and community partners to accomplish these goals. [The Mississippi Center for Emergency Services \(MCES\)](#) is an essential partner in this project for improving and delivering trainings. Dr. Brian Tollefson, Director of MCES, has extensive experience developing and delivering naloxone administration trainings to medical first-responders. The Mississippi Department of Mental Health and the Bartkowski & Associates Research Team are partnering with MSPHI to identify the areas and populations with the greatest need for trainings.

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About [MSPHI](#)

MSPHI promotes public health through projects in policy evaluation, community health, data analysis, and health access across the state of Mississippi. MSPHI fosters partnerships that bolster and advance program innovation and health equity while increasing the accessibility and impact of health resources, education, health awareness, and applied research and policy. Some of their work includes providing opportunities for convening/partnering, health communications & social marketing, health policy development, implementation & evaluation, population-based health programs, and training & technical assistance.