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news release

Adjusting to Change as COVID-19 Impacts Regular Operations

INDIANAPOLIS - As businesses and agencies across the nation amend operations to achieve their primary missions during the COVID-19 pandemic, Overdose Lifeline (ODL) continues to work with their public safety partners to achieve the common goals of saving lives and reducing harm. Indiana and ODL have been national leaders in the opioid epidemic facing our nation. From championing Aaron's Law allowing the lay public to possess and use naloxone, to research-based online educational programs, and even collaborating with the Indianapolis Metropolitan Police Department (IMPD) as the first law enforcement agency in Indiana and one of the first in the nation to utilize naloxone in the field for opioid overdose reversal.

Given the close proximity to the patient when administering naloxone, and the inability to determine if someone is COVID-19 positive, it is critical that every safety precaution is taken to protect first responders and others in the area. There is no way to predict how someone will react and respond when revived, which could include heavy coughing and spitting, so proper protection is necessary. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for specialized personal protective equipment (PPE) by responders coupled with an increased demand for these items in the healthcare setting has resulted in a medical recommendation for IMPD to interrupt their use of officer-administered naloxone. Chief Dan O'Donnell, MD with Indianapolis Emergency Medical Services, said, "While this program has been a success, we are in no way compromising care to overdose patients by suspending police naloxone use. Fire and Emergency Medical Services are still dispatched to these runs and are responding in a timely manner." From early trials with law enforcement-administered naloxone through current models, Fire/EMS response was always a requirement, primarily because the patient requires medical support provided by Fire/EMS. When asked how this necessary change in response impacts Overdose Lifeline, executive director Justin Phillips said, "While law enforcement administered naloxone is important, having naloxone in the hands of the lay public remains a foundation of saving those experiencing an opioid overdose."

Just as ODL responded to the surge in opioid overdose-related deaths by implementing strong and novel actions based in fact and science, again they are prepared to act even in light of COVID-19. Overdose Lifeline has a mechanism in place for persons in need of naloxone. Indiana residents that need this lifesaving medication can reach out to Overdose Lifeline and remain anonymous, at contact@overdoselifeline.org or by phone at 317-828-6883. Also, those who wish to help provide naloxone for those in need can make monetary donations by contacting ODL. Phillips added, "We support and recognize the need for the health and safety of our IMPD partners during this pandemic and we look forward to returning to our very successful model as soon as conditions will allow."

Overdose Lifeline is a statewide, Indiana, 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization dedicated to helping individuals, families, and communities affected by the disease of addiction/substance use disorder through advocacy, education, harm reduction, prevention, resources, and support. The organization had been on the front lines of the opioid epidemic since 2014 designing and deploying programs and initiatives and serving as a statewide non-governmental subject matter expert addressing the opioid public health crisis.

To learn more about **Overdose Lifeline**, visit www.overdoselifeline.org. You can also follow ODL on Facebook (<http://facebook.com/overdoselifeline>) and Twitter (<http://twitter.com/overdoseifeline>).

Attached: photos of the gowns and half-face respirator masks worn by IEMS paramedics and EMTs, examples of the PPE not readily available for law enforcement officers.