

Recommendations on bulk purchasing and distribution of prescription drugs

Second Substitute Senate Bill 5195; Section 7(7); Chapter 273; Laws of 2021

December 9, 2024

Naloxone bulk purchasing and distribution

Second Substitute Senate Bill 5195 (2021) directed the Health Care Authority (HCA) to create a naloxone bulk purchasing and distribution program. HCA completed two legislative reports required in Section 7 of the bill. These two reports can be found here:

- [Opioid overdose reversal medication bulk purchasing and distribution program legislative report \(2022\) \(wa.gov\)](#)
- [Opioid overdose reversal medication bulk purchasing and distribution program legislative report \(2023\) \(wa.gov\)](#)

HCA has not implemented a naloxone bulk purchasing and distribution program because we have found doing so would be inefficient and ineffective.

After discussions with drug manufacturers, including Emergent BioSolutions (the manufacturer of brand name Narcan nasal spray), and with other states studying bulk purchasing and manufacturing, including California, HCA has determined that bulk purchasing will not lower the cost for purchasers and health care systems in the state. Drug manufacturers were not willing to offer a lower cost to Washington than is already being offered on the market, even if Washington were to partner with other states in bulk purchasing.

Without a discount on the unit cost of the drug, the state has no mechanism to recover the costs associated with creating a new naloxone purchasing program other than through the pricing structure for naloxone. Program costs would include selecting a vendor through a Request for Proposal, communications, marketing, and ongoing administration. Recovering these costs through the product pricing structure would make naloxone more costly when purchased through the program rather than through existing distributors.

Additionally, stakeholders voiced concerns with the state about creating a new system for entities to purchase and receive naloxone, saying it created a fragmented system for ordering drugs for their organizations. These comments from stakeholders are described in greater detail in the 2023 report.

In Section 7(7) of 2SSB 5195, the Legislature directed HCA to submit this legislative report to make recommendations regarding expanding the bulk purchasing and distribution program to include other prescription drugs. Since HCA is unable to create a bulk purchasing and distribution program that would lower costs and create a positive impact for Washingtonians, HCA does not have recommendations for

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adding drugs to that program. Instead, HCA is pursuing other strategies for improving access to naloxone and long-acting injectable (LAI) buprenorphine for Washingtonians.

Recommendations for moving forward

HCA is sponsoring a Decision Package for the 2025 legislative session, “LF-Naloxone for BH Agencies” that requests funding for naloxone and LAI buprenorphine in accordance with stakeholder feedback received when studying naloxone purchasing and distribution. Through stakeholder feedback, HCA identified a gap in care in our communities. Behavioral Health Agencies (BHA) are unable to afford an initial stock of naloxone to distribute to patients.

Similarly, HCA is requesting continuation of funding from SB 5950 (2024); Section 215(126); for maintaining access to LAI buprenorphine for smaller providers who face challenges with affording an initial supply of this opioid use disorder treatment.