

Adam Crum
Commissioner

health.alaska.gov



Department of Health

Anchorage, Alaska

STATE OF ALASKA

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Clinton Bennett, DOH, 907-269-4996, clinton.bennett@alaska.gov

Project Gabe is expanding to provide naloxone and opioid overdose prevention information to more industries statewide

October 7, 2022, ANCHORAGE – The Alaska Department of Health (DOH) is expanding Project Gabe this month to provide opioid misuse awareness, education and prevention resources to a broader range of industries across Alaska.

When Project Gabe was launched in June, Public Health Nursing, in partnership with the Office of Substance Misuse and Addiction Prevention and the Healthy and Equitable Communities team, focused primarily on collaboration with the fishing industry in Southeast Alaska, Kenai, Kodiak and Bristol Bay.

To date, around 250 Project Gabe boxes containing naloxone, fentanyl test strips and educational materials have been installed in seafood processing plants and other businesses.

Starting this month, Project Gabe will now focus on providing opioid overdose emergency boxes and prevention education to additional regions and industries, with box build-out events happening from 10 a.m. to noon on Monday, Oct. 10, in both Anchorage and Ketchikan.

Project Gabe is named in honor of Gabe Johnston, who died of an opioid overdose in January of 2022 and was the son of Sitka Public Health Nurse Denise Ewing.

“We are extremely thankful to Project Gabe for providing these boxes and training to our employees,” said Marissa Medford, the human resource coordinator for E.C. Phillips and Son, a seafood buyer and distributor based in Ketchikan. “The opioid epidemic has unfortunately impacted so many of us and this is a necessary program to save lives. Everyone should have the access and ability to administer naloxone and render aid until paramedics arrive, just like any other first aid emergency treatment.”

Project Gabe uses the existing DOH program, Project HOPE, to distribute naloxone, a medication that can reverse an opioid overdose, and fentanyl test strips, which can test for the presence of fentanyl in drugs, to working Alaskans.

Project Gabe provides education and naloxone free of charge through four main ways:

- 1) By installing opioid emergency boxes in common rooms within businesses.

- 2) By distributing water-resistant bags containing naloxone on fishing fleet vessels.
- 3) By providing opioid overdose kits to individuals to keep on hand in any location.
- 4) By partnering with industry to provide education to Alaska workers about the risks of opioids and substance misuse.

"This program has been extremely well-received, and the boxes have been welcomed by businesses, community gathering places, dentist offices, harbor offices, probation offices and other workplaces," said Public Health Nurse and Project Gabe founder Denise Ewing. "We're excited to be expanding to additional geographic regions, additional industries and to also be ordering dry bags for fishing vessel distribution next season, as well as translating educational materials into other languages."

Members of the media are invited to come to the Frontier Building in Anchorage and the Ketchikan Public Health Center on Monday, Oct. 10, to see the opioid emergency boxes being assembled and to talk with Public Health Nursing staff. Please email Clinton Bennett at clinton.bennett@alaska.gov if you are interested in attending this event.

More resources:

- To connect with or participate in Project Gabe, email projectgabe@alaska.gov.
- To learn more about Project Gabe, view this [video overview](#).
- For information about opioids in Alaska, visit opioids.alaska.gov.
- For Alaska workplaces: [Addiction and the Workplace](#) toolkit and [webpage](#)

#