

Success Summary

- Harm reduction vending machines were installed in Huron and Ross counties that provide 24/7 access to essential life-saving items such as naloxone.
- Data collected from both counties show how vital these resources are in the communities.

Background

Two Ohio counties, Huron and Ross, wanted to take an approach that allowed around-the-clock access to harm reduction items to help combat substance use and overdose deaths, especially related to opioids. Huron County Public Health installed a harm reduction vending machine in Norwalk, Ohio, after data showed this part of the county was disproportionately impacted by overdoses. Ross County partnered with the public library system to implement six harm reduction vending machines throughout the county.

The Strategy

Huron County Public Health staff stocked its vending machine primarily with naloxone with other harm reduction materials. The county allowed open access to all items in the vending machine. The Huron County Health Department engaged in efforts to educate the public about the need for harm reduction and reduction of stigma related to substance use disorder. With support of the coalition and the HEALing Communities Study (HCS) staff, this was completed using the HCS health communication campaigns about naloxone, distributing press releases about the vending machine, and giving presentations to their board of directors and public about the need for the harm reduction vending machine in their community. Usage was tracked by recording the number of items needing to be restocked. Huron County opted not to track usage through registration via phone or text because health department staff thought stigma could prevent people from registering for codes to access.

The Hope Partnership Project, a local coalition in Ross County, partnered with the Chillicothe and Ross County Public Library and the Ross County Health District to install their six harm reduction vending machines in Kingston, Richmond Dale and in three sites in Chillicothe. Library locations were chosen to host the harm reduction vending machines because libraries often have resources available for many situations and are places where everyone is welcome. The chosen locations in the library system already had infrastructure available, such as Wi-Fi services, secure locations with overheard protection, and concrete pads for placement. Users of the vending machines were required to make an account to access the items in the machine. Individuals were able to use their login credentials multiple times or make new credentials, if needed.

Huron & Ross Counties: Harm Reduction Vending Machines



*From left: The harm reduction vending machine in Huron County;
two of Ross County's harm reduction vending machines.*

Impact

- From July 2023 to December 2023, the harm reduction vending machine in Huron County restocked 616 naloxone kits, demonstrating the need for access to basic harm reduction resources.
- From January 1, 2024, through June 26, 2024, 195 people registered to use one of the harm reduction vending machines in Ross County.
 - There were 1,278 items dispensed from the six machines: 286 naloxone kits, 204 wound kits, 190 safe use kits, 184 hygiene kits, 146 safe sex kits, 122 sharps containers, 78 bundles of five fentanyl testing strips, and 68 pregnancy tests.

Peer recovery supporters in Ross County also made 37 connections based on information collected from the harm reduction vending machines. When an individual signed up using their credentials to access the machines, they were able to give their personal information (voluntarily) for a peer supporter to be able to contact them within 72 hours. The peer supporters used this to check-in on individuals, but also offer them additional services, such as treatment options.

Members of the Hope Partnership Project have been encouraged to see the harm reduction vending machines in Ross County being used so frequently in a short amount of time and the connections being made between peer recovery supporters and people who may be ready to enter treatment. One of the greatest impacts for residents of both Huron and Ross is the ability to access life-saving supplies, such as naloxone, on a 24-hour basis at no cost to the residents of these counties.