

Ducey's 911 "Good Samaritan" Proposal is a Responsible Justice Solution to the Ongoing Opioid Crisis

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Phoenix, Arizona – October 4, 2017 – Hundreds of people die from drug overdoses each day (64,000 deaths in 2016). Overdoses have now surpassed motor vehicle fatalities as the leading cause of injury-related death in the United States. In Arizona, the spike in overdoses has reached such devastating heights that Governor Ducey declared it in June a [statewide health emergency](#).

In many respects, Arizona is leading the way in fighting this disturbing trend. Thanks to a law passed by the state legislature last year, first responders, community organizations, and family members now have access to opioid antagonists such as Narcan and Naloxone to stop an overdose in its tracks. However, not everyone has these life-saving tools on hand when they or someone they know is experiencing an overdose. They must call for help – many do not.

Reporting an Overdose in Progress Should Not be a Crime

If treated in time, overdose deaths are preventable. Most overdose-related deaths occur just a few hours after the victim has taken the drug. Their chance of survival is completely dependent upon how quickly they can receive medical assistance. The most commonly cited reason for not calling for help is fear of arrest or punishment by law enforcement.

While tragic, these fears are not without warrant. A witness calling for emergency medical help for an overdose could face years in prison if they are found in possession of drugs or drug paraphernalia. What's more, without changes to the law, volunteer medical professionals and witnesses who aid an overdose victim face possible prosecution for doing so.

Good Samaritan Laws Save Lives

Governor Ducey's [Opioid Action Plan](#), released earlier this month, includes a recommendation that the Legislature enact a Good Samaritan law to prevent prosecution for those calling for help during an overdose.

To date, 40 states have some form of Good Samaritan laws on their books. Designed to save lives, these measures provide general immunity from arrest or prosecution for certain possession offenses when calling 911 for assistance with an overdose. In each case, these laws have proven to [save 9 to 11 percent of victims](#) from an overdose. In Arizona, this would have amounted to **nearly 100 lives saved** in 2017 alone.

As a network of organizations focused on bringing responsible justice solutions to Arizona, we support the Governor's recommendation for a Good Samaritan law and urge the Legislature for a quick and swift passage of the bill in the upcoming legislative session.

Addiction Haven, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Arizona, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) Arizona Chapter, Arizona Attorneys for Criminal Justice (AACJ), Arizona Council of Human Service Providers (AzCHSP), Arizona Medical Association (ArMA), Arizona Opioid Treatment Coalition (AOTC), Arizona Osteopathic Medical Association (AOMA), Arizona Public Health Association (AzPHA), Aunt Rita's Foundation, CODAC, Community Medical Services, Copper Basin Coalition, Gila County Department of Health, HOPE, Mohave County, Intensive Treatment Systems, Kingman Area Meth Coalition, Law Enforcement Action Partnership (LEAP), Mohave County Department of Public Health, Mohave Substance Abuse Treatment & Education Prevention Partnership (MSTEPP), Sonoran Prevention Works

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