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**VERMONT LAW ENFORCEMENT & COMMUNITY LEADERS URGE
VERMONTERS TO CALL 9-1-1 IF OVERDOSE OCCURS**

Good Samaritan Law Provides Protection from Criminal Prosecution

BURLINGTON – Vermont law enforcement and public health leaders today joined together to urge Vermonters to call 9-1-1 if an overdose occurs to save people’s lives. Vermont’s Good Samaritan Law provides protections from criminal liability for those who call for help from the scene of an overdose.

A [recent report](#) from the Vermont Department of Health (VDH) found that, based on preliminary data, opioid-related deaths increased by 38 percent in Vermont in 2020, from 114 deaths in 2019 to 157 in 2020. According to VDH, fentanyl—which was involved in 88 percent of opioid-related deaths in 2020—continues to be the primary driver of opioid-related deaths in Vermont. Attorney General T.J. Donovan, Vermont State Police Colonel Matthew T. Birmingham, and Grace Keller, Program Coordinator of Howard Center Safe Recovery, are urging Vermonters to utilize the protections provided by Vermont’s Good Samaritan Law and to call for medical help in the event of an overdose, without fear of criminal consequences.

Under the [Good Samaritan Law](#), passed in 2013, calling emergency medical assistance for a drug or alcohol overdose creates protections from drug prosecutions and violations of furlough or parole. The law intends to save people’s lives by incentivizing calling for help by providing immunity for those who call to report an overdose.

“Saving lives is a top priority for Vermont's law enforcement, not prosecuting those seeking medical help in emergencies,” said Attorney General Donovan. “I hope that we can spread greater awareness about the Good Samaritan Law so that no Vermonter fears calling 9-1-1 in the event of an overdose. Taking this action step could save someone’s life.”

“Vermont’s laws should reflect Vermont values. The Good Samaritan Law is a perfect example of that,” said Grace Keller, Program Coordinator of Howard Center Safe Recovery. “We value the lives of all Vermonters and want people to have the most timely access to life-saving services and a humane response to overdose. In an overdose situation every second counts and the best allies we have are the people at the scene. As with any other medical emergency, we want them to automatically call 9-1-1 without question or fear.”

“When you are in an emergency situation, we don’t want you to hesitate or wonder whether calling 9-1-1 is the right thing to do. It is!” said Col. Matthew T. Birmingham, director of the Vermont State Police. “Saving a life is the most important thing. Those of us in law enforcement want you to know that we are there to help with the health and safety of victims of a drug overdose. We want you to remember that you will not face criminal consequences, and you could save your loved one’s life!”

Under the Good Samaritan Law, commonly referred to as “the Good Sam Law,” when someone seeks medical assistance for an overdose, the overdose victim and anyone helping care for the victim while awaiting emergency medical assistance cannot:

- Be prosecuted for any drug crime based on evidence found from the incident;
- Get sanctioned for violating trial release, probation, furlough, or parole for being at the scene of an overdose;

- Be found in violation of a restraining order, for being at the scene of the drug overdose, or for being within close proximity to any person at the scene of the drug overdose;
- Have personal property seized by law enforcement through civil asset forfeiture from that incident.

There are, however, limitations to the protections in the Good Samaritan Law, which Vermonters should know about. For example, this law does not protect from eviction, DCF intervention, or other civil legal cases.

For more information and resources, including free fentanyl test strips and free and anonymous Narcan overdose reversal kits, contact [Howard Center Safe Recovery](#) at 802-488-6067.

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