The Revised Code of Washington (RCW) has certain laws in place to provide protections to people who are responding to an overdose. These include laws to protect the responder or the person overdosing from drug possession charges that would possibly result from seeking help, as well as laws to protect you if you to respond to a medical emergency such as an overdose with an intervention like naloxone.

**What is the “good samaritan” law?**

Washington State’s 911 Good Samaritan Overdose Law (RCW 69.50.315) protects a person experiencing an overdose, or a person getting help for someone who is overdosing, from controlled substance charges (with exceptions).

**RCW 69.50.315 states that:**

1. **A person acting in good faith who seeks medical assistance for someone experiencing a drug-related overdose shall not be charged or prosecuted for possession of a controlled substance pursuant to RCW 69.50.4013, or penalized under RCW 69.50.4014, if the evidence for the charge of possession of a controlled substance was obtained as a result of the person seeking medical assistance.**

2. **A person who experiences a drug-related overdose and is in need of medical assistance shall not be charged or prosecuted for possession of a controlled substance pursuant to RCW 69.50.4013, or penalized under RCW 69.50.4014, if the evidence for the charge of possession of a controlled substance was obtained as a result of the overdose and the need for medical assistance.**

3. **The protection in this section from prosecution for possession crimes under RCW 69.50.4013 shall not be grounds for suppression of evidence in other criminal charges.**

**What other laws protect me in responding to an overdose?**

- **RCW 69.41.095** allows anyone at risk for having or witnessing a drug overdose to obtain naloxone, carry it, and administer it in an overdose.
- **RCW 4.24.300** provides immunity from civil liabilities when responding in a medical emergency.

**Does the law protect against any other charges?**

No. The law does not protect you from outstanding warrants, probation or parole violations, drug manufacture or delivery, controlled substances homicide, or crimes other than drug possession. It is up to the discretion of the responding officer to decide whether to bring you in if any other charges would apply.

**If I don’t call 911 but I take the overdose victim to the emergency room, will the law still apply?**

The immunity applies to any good faith effort to seek medical help such as calling 911, taking the overdose victim to an emergency room, or running to get a neighbor who is a nurse.

**Does the law apply if the person dies from the overdose?**

As long as you seek medical help in good faith, you still receive immunity from drug possession charges. However, if you are the person who gave the victim the drugs that caused the overdose, you can be charged with controlled substances homicide. If you are found guilty, however, the judge may consider your efforts to help when deciding the length of your sentence.

**What about alcohol poisoning and underage drinking? Does the law protect people under 21 from alcohol possession charges?**

The 911 Good Samaritan Overdose law was amended in 2013 to also apply to alcohol poisoning. Even if you are under the age of 21, you cannot be charged with possession of alcohol as a minor if you call 911 to help someone suffering from alcohol poisoning. The victim of alcohol poisoning is also protected.