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**Watseka** – Overdoses, fueled by opioids, are the leading cause of deaths for Americans under 50 years old – killing roughly 64,000 people last year, more than guns and car accidents. Opioids are a class of drugs that include the illicit drug heroin, as well as prescription pain relievers oxycodone, hydrocodone, codeine, morphine, fentanyl and others.

With this growing epidemic, it is important to have as many bystanders trained to administer Naloxone as possible. Naloxone, or Narcan, is an opioid antagonist medication that can be used to rapidly reverse an opioid overdose while giving additional time for emergency medical personnel to arrive. It can quickly restore breathing and brain function, thereby saving the life of a person experiencing an opioid overdose. Naloxone can be administered by a nasal spray or an injection. In Illinois it is legal for non-medical professionals to administer naloxone to an individual experiencing an overdose.

The Iroquois County Public Health Department is offering free Naloxone training to interested individuals. Dee Ann Schippert, Administrator of the Iroquois County Public Health Department, said education and treatment are critical elements of the fight against the opioid epidemic. “Participants in the training will learn how to recognize the signs and symptoms of an opioid overdose, and then how to properly administer Naloxone to reverse a potentially deadly overdose,” said Schippert. “They will also receive two doses of Narcan to take with them. The more people we educate, the more lives we save, with a goal of getting people long-term treatment and recovery care.”

For more information or to schedule training please call the Iroquois County Public Health Department at 815-432-2483.