



PRESS RELEASE

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SANTA BARBARA COUNTY SHERIFF AND EMERGENCY SERVICES AGENCY INITIATE OPIOID OVERDOSE PROGRAM

(SANTA BARBARA, Calif.) - The Santa Barbara County Emergency Medical Services Agency (EMS), a division of the County Department of Public Health, and the Santa Barbara County Sheriff's Office are pleased to announce a program to administer Naloxone for suspected opioid overdoses. Sheriff's Office patrol personnel are trained to know when to give Naloxone to block the effects of opioids. The goal of this initiative is to save lives associated with opiate overdoses.

Our nation is experiencing an opioid epidemic and Santa Barbara County is not immune from this trend. Between 2011 and 2016, the Sheriff's Coroner Unit observed a marked increase in overdose deaths. In 2016, opioids were present in approximately 65 percent of the overdose deaths that occurred in Santa Barbara County.

Opioids cause death by slowing and eventually stopping the person's breathing. Naloxone nasal spray is an approved medication through the U.S. Food and Drug Administration. Naloxone works by temporarily blocking the effects of opioids, including prescription pain killers and street drugs like heroin. When administered, Naloxone, also known as Narcan, restores central nervous system functions including respirations within two to five minutes, and may prevent brain injury and death. Naloxone has no potential for abuse and has no known adverse effects on persons who are not experiencing an opioid overdose.

Many of Santa Barbara County's residents reside in rural and semi-rural settings that are located a considerable distance from Emergency Medical Services. Because of this, Sheriff's Office personnel may be the first emergency responders to arrive at the scene of an overdose. Providing law enforcement with the knowledge and tools to treat opioid overdoses within our communities can reduce the time between when an opioid overdose victim is discovered and when they are able to receive lifesaving assistance through the administration of naloxone.

The Department of Public Health, EMS Agency and the Sheriff's Office, engaged in a collaborative effort to research the Naloxone program requirements outlined within the California Code of Regulations, and build the necessary policies and training protocols for the implementation of a naloxone program within the Sheriff's Office. The necessary policies and training protocols were completed and approved in early 2017, with all Sheriff's Office law enforcement personnel trained in the appropriate use of Naloxone during the first quarter of 2017. The Department of Behavioral Wellness was also a key partner in this initiative. The Naloxone kits are being issued to all deputy Sheriff's Office personnel assigned to the patrol function.