

Foothill-De Anza Community College District Police Begin Carrying "Narcan" to Combat Opioid Overdose



Beginning Aug. 1, patrol officers of the Foothill-De Anza Community College District Police Department began carrying Naloxone, better known as "Narcan," in an effort to save lives in the event of opioid overdoses. The department is the first law enforcement agency in Santa Clara County to carry the overdose antidote.

Narcan has proven effective in reversing the symptoms of an opioid overdose and saving numerous lives. The medication carried by the police officers is administered via a nasal spray. Long used by paramedics, it is increasingly being

carried by other first responders to treat an overdose from drugs like heroin and prescription opioid painkillers.

"We are seeing an increase of opioid overdoses in Santa Clara County", said Ronald Levine, chief of the Foothill-De Anza Police Department. "I was surprised to learn about the number of overdoses in the communities that surround our campuses. It is important that our officers be prepared to address any medical emergency they might encounter during their shift."

Foothill-De Anza Police and the Santa Clara County Emergency Medical Services Agency (EMSA) held a joint press conference on Aug. 8 to discuss the police department's issuance of Narcan to its patrol officers. After a brief presentation, reporters were welcomed to observe a Narcan training class.



Conducted by the police department's emergency medical training officer, the two-hour class for Foothill-De Anza police officers covers the proper administration of Narcan. The training includes identifying symptoms of an overdose, proper positioning of the patient, monitoring of vital signs and the use of CPR or a defibrillator if appropriate. The Santa Clara County Emergency Medical Services Agency reviewed the training curriculum for content and proper medical care.

Several months ago, Levine asked his staff to investigate the possibility of Foothill-De Anza police officers carrying Narcan. After significant research by Deputy Chief Jeff Schlesinger and Officer James Thurber, the department created a draft policy, procedure and training program. Levine requested the assistance of the county's Emergency Medical Services Agency and Dr. Ken Miller, the agency's medical director, provided his input and guidance.

“Early recognition of opiate-related respiratory depression and the administration of Naloxone by law enforcement patrol officers can prevent subsequent brain injury and cardiac arrest particularly when law enforcement officers are the first public safety personnel to attend to the patient,” Dr. Miller said.

More law enforcement agencies across the country are expected to begin carrying Narcan. On July 26, President Barack Obama signed into law federal legislation aimed at reducing a growing national epidemic of heroin and prescription opiate deaths. It includes \$181 million in funding for states to battle heroin and opiate addiction, and deaths, including providing Naloxone to first responders in law enforcement.

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