



News Release

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Photo Caption 5521: Lt. Kenneth Worley, EMS, demonstrates how to administer Narcan, a lifesaving drug to reverse an overdose if administered in time.

#5525: OCSO Deputy Paul Ruhbusch, practices preparation to administer Narcan nasally to a patient while EMS Lt. Kenneth Worley looks on.

Media Note: See training video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCtznAbzoXA>

Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office and Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Partner's to Address Drug Overdose Problem

On March 1, 2016 the Okaloosa County Board County Commissioners approved an extremely important partnership between the Okaloosa County Department of Public Safety's EMS Division and the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office to address the rising opioid/heroin overdose problem in this region of the state. In the current situation of rising opioid/heroin use in the region, this partnership is expected to be very influential in reducing overdose-related mortality in Okaloosa County.

Undersheriff Don Adams reported that in 2015 "Okaloosa County Sheriff's Deputies responded to 55 Heroin/Opiate overdoses. Sadly, 19 of those cases resulted in deaths." EMS Chief Tracey Vause Okaloosa reported that EMS administered Narcan, a lifesaving opioid antagonist medication, 343 times on 233 different patients in the same period. (Watch a short training video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oCtznAbzoXA>.)

The Sheriff's Office and EMS will work collaboratively in increasing the community's access to Narcan through the Early Opiate Overdose Intervention Partnership Program. The Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office is well positioned and can be easily trained to safely carry and administer Narcan to suspected opioid overdose patients, sometimes well in advance of an incoming EMS ambulance. The EMS Medical Director will oversee the training of Sheriff's deputies and monitor the use of Naloxone under this program.

Opioid use, such as heroine and prescription opiates like morphine, OxyContin, and fentanyl, has increased across most demographic groups in the U.S. regardless of sex, age, race or income levels. In July 2015, the CDC reported findings that heroin use and heroin-related overdose deaths in the U.S. have increased substantially and the rate of heroin-related overdose deaths nearly quadrupled from 2002 - 2013. In 2013 alone over 8,200 people died from heroin overdose. As well, Okaloosa County EMS, the Department of Health in Okaloosa County and the Okaloosa County Sheriff's Office have all experienced a measurable increase in opiate-related overdoses in Okaloosa County requiring some form of immediate out-of-hospital intervention.

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