



COUNTY OF KENOSHA

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Opioid death prevention grant already saving lives in Kenosha County

KENOSHA – On the same day Kenosha County public health nurses completed naloxone training with members of the Pleasant Prairie Police Department, officers there scored their first “save,” reviving a man who was experiencing an opioid overdose.

Naloxone – known by the brand name Narcan – is an emergency medication used to reverse overdoses caused by opioids such as heroin, oxycodone, hydrocodone and fentanyl. The Kenosha County Division of Health recently received a \$225,000 Prescription Drug Opioid Overdose Prevention grant from the Wisconsin Department of Health Services to distribute Narcan to law enforcement and other community agencies and organizations that may find themselves in the position to save people from overdose.

To date, two people have been saved by community partners who have received Narcan training from the county. The first was in Wheatland, where a volunteer firefighter/paramedic administered the drug while responding to a call for service earlier this month. The second was on Tuesday night, hours after Pleasant Prairie officers completed the training.

“Officers responded to an unconscious, nonresponsive 46-year-old male,” said Deputy Chief Daniel Reilly. “His friend stated it was probably an opioid OD. Narcan was administered and the party woke up 15 seconds later. He admitted to use of Oxy stemming from a back surgery.”

Reilly said the shift that was on duty Tuesday night was the first to receive the training. He said his department is pleased to have access to the medication through the county grant.

“This is something that we’ve been looking forward to, and were trying to find a financial way of accomplishing,” Reilly said. “The grant has provided us with that and we have immediate payoff, so we couldn’t be happier with it.”

The grant that the county received from the state is part of a pool of \$11 million in Prescription Drug Opioid Overdose Prevention grants that the U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration awarded to 11 states last year. The resulting Wisconsin Prescription Drug/Opioid Overdose Deaths Prevention Project is a five-year grant that awards \$1 million each year to the three highest-need counties. Kenosha County received \$225,000 for the first year – an amount that may change in future years if additional counties are added to the program.

In Kenosha County and elsewhere, a marked increase in opioid overdose deaths has been attributed to abuse of prescription painkiller medications, as well as heroin.

“Already, we’ve saved lives,” said Amanda Tuura, a public health nurse with the Kenosha County Division of Health who is involved with administering the training. “There’s certainly a need in Kenosha County. We’re very fortunate that we received the grant, and very hopeful we can have continued success.”

Kenosha County’s efforts to battle opioid addiction include the Narcan program, as well as an initiative to offer Vivitrol, a medication that helps to subdue alcohol and opiate cravings, to select defendants in the criminal justice system.

“These programs are saving lives and creating a path to treatment,” said Kenosha County Executive Jim Kreuser. “The goal is to save lives and to save money, by steering people toward treatment rather than time in our jail.”

The Division of Health will provide short information sessions to high-needs community agencies and organizations that would like to have Narcan available on site. For more information, please contact: Gianna Ventura, RN, at 262-605-6736 and Amanda Tuura, RN, at 262-605-6718.

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