



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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Press Release

NATIONAL RECOGNITION FOR NORFOLK COUNTY'S OPIATE OVERDOSE PREVENTION PROGRAM

Norfolk County's strategies for saving lives in opiate overdoses were held up as national models at the Prescription Drug Abuse Summit in Atlanta last week.

"We all saw the lives that the Quincy Police Department was saving after training and supplying their officers with the overdose-reversal drug naloxone as part of a pilot program through the state Department of Public Health," Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey said after the Atlanta Conference. "Stoughton was experiencing its own surge in fatal overdoses, but the DPH was not willing to expand the program. We knew we had to break down the barriers to make it available to every town that wanted it."

DA Morrissey shared the presentation platform with Stoughton Police Chief Paul Shastany, Fire Chief Mark Dolloff and Stephanie Patton, the Substance Abuse Prevention Coordinator for the group Organizing Against Substances in Stoughton (OASIS).

Naloxone, commonly referred to by the trade name Narcan, is a controlled substance although it has no dangerous or euphoric properties. Naloxone provides a temporary halt to the life-threatening effects of opiate overdose; it is simple to use, but it is not a panacea, and those administering it need appropriate training, Morrissey said. And a prescription, or its equivalent, to acquire to acquire the substance.

"Stoughton overcame the roadblocks to having Narcan in every cruiser by acquiring a medical director who would provide the needed training and standing order to resupply the drug after it is used," Morrissey said. "We were able to look at the success in Quincy, take the Stoughton model, and replicate it for departments throughout the county."



Norfolk DA Michael Morrissey, at left, pauses at the national prescription drug safety conference with, from left, Assistant DA Jennifer Rowe, head of his crime prevention unit, Quincy activist Kathy Deady, Morrissey's opiate overdose prevention project coordinator Ryan Walker, and Lyn Frano, Weymouth's substance abuse prevention coordinator.

The March 26, 2014 training that resulted from the partnership included police departments, fire departments, or both from every community in Norfolk County that did not already have a program in place. Morrissey also used money forfeited by drug dealers to purchase 900 doses of naloxone that he provided to the 28 communities in his district.

South Shore Congressman William R. Keating, part of the Congressional Caucus on Prescription Drug Abuse and a former Norfolk DA, and North Shore Congresswoman Katherine Clark were among national leaders attending the conference. "Some of these cry out for national solutions, like making naloxone an over the counter drug and readily available," DA Morrissey said.

"Massachusetts has strong partners like Rep. Keating and Rep. Clark working in Washington. But today, right now, there are things that local and regional authorities can do to save lives in the midst of this overdose epidemic. I hope that, to the best of our ability, we were able to share some of those strategies with others from across the country."

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