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# The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

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### Press Release

## DA Morrissey trains school nurses In spotting abuse, reversing overdoses

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School nurses, athletic trainers and athletic directors from across Norfolk County – more than 80 in all – attended a two-part opiate safety training hosted by Norfolk DA Michael W. Morrissey on Dec. 16.

The event included instruction in to use the opiate overdose reversal drug naloxone and an evidence-based screening system to identify students at risk for addiction – particularly following post-operative prescribing for sports injuries.

“The training was in two distinct parts. The Director of School Health Services for the Department of Public Health, Mary Ann Gapinski, provided the SBIRT training,” District Attorney Morrissey said. “SBIRT stands for Screening, Brief Intervention and Referral to Treatment.”

The second training segment, instructing school nurses on administering the opiate overdose reversal drug naloxone, and associated treatment, was provided by Dr. Daniel Muse, director of the emergency department at Brockton Hospital. “Dr. Muse serves at medical director for the naloxone program we have provided to our municipal police departments,” Morrissey said.



The Norfolk DA's Office was the first in the state, if not the country, to offer naloxone training and supply to every police and fire department in its district. It is the first in Massachusetts, if not the country, to offer the training to all of its school nurses and sports trainers.

Nurses serving students from every Norfolk County community attended the event, which was held in seminar and training space donated by the Bank of Canton at its headquarters.

“The naloxone training grabbed the headlines and the TV spots, but we view the SBIRT portion as equally important,” Morrissey said. “It is aimed at identifying bellwether behaviors and initial warning signs before the disease of addiction has taken full hold. We are looking to prevent the eventual need for naloxone, even as we train to use it.”

Morrissey reviews the circumstances of every fatal overdose his office responds to looking for trends and commonalities. “Many overdose decedents were introduced to opioids during their high school years following surgery for a sports injury,” Morrissey said. “Everyone with a medical role in our schools needs to know that. It may save lives.”



Morrissey, who has provided school safety grants to public school systems for the last several years, is going to supplement DPH funding to make the full implementation of SBIRT possible without cost to the towns as his grants this year.

“As one of our trainers said, schools don't have universal postural screening because every student has scoliosis,” Morrissey said. “But if screening catches a problem early enough, prompt intervention can prevent a lifetime of negative consequences. The same holds with substance-abuse screening.”