

Other Cincinnati-area communities borrow Colerain's idea to combat heroin epidemic

Quick Response Team has 80% success rate

COLERAIN TWP., Ohio -- The letters QRT are becoming an increasingly vital tool for communities battling the heroin epidemic.

They stand for Quick Response Team -- an initiative started in Colerain Township and now spreading all over the Tri-State.

What's the buzz?

Colerain says four out of five addicts its team encounters go into treatment.

It was 2014 when Administrator Dan Meloy oversaw creation of the first Quick Response Team.

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The idea was put a police officer, a firefighter/paramedic and an addiction counselor in an emergency vehicle and respond to overdoses — plus schedule follow-up visits.

It's worked so well that Norwood, Lawrenceburg and Kenton County have copied that program and created a QRT. Kenton County Police Chief Spike Jones and Independence Fire District Chief Scott Breeze launched theirs last week after nearly a year of planning.

"We want to prevent people from overdosing," Jones said. "We want to get them into treatment, see if we can get their lives back on track."

"Our main goal is to save lives and help out our community," Breeze said.

Statistics paint a troubling picture of the need.

"Going back to last year, we had a total of about 79 to 80 overdoses and we had 12 deaths," Breeze said.

So far this year, there have been 20 overdoses and four fatalities in the Independence, Piner/Fiskburg, Ryland Heights and Kenton fire districts.

And several of those in just the past seven days.

"We've had two overdoses since last Thursday. One of them was a fatality," Breeze said.

Like Colerain Township, the Kenton County team hit the streets trying to interact with addicts and their families. The difference is Kenton County is using part-time employees.

"Their full-time attention during their time here is to be spent on the QRT and helping these people prevent future overdoses and help save lives," Jones said.

The increase in the number of Quick Response Teams is a direct result of Colerain Township's success.

"Since July of 2015, our QRT has conducted a little over 250 follow-ups and of those 250 follow-ups, those patients we've been in contact with, 80 percent of them have gotten into recovery," said Assistant Fire Chief Will Mueller, who was part of the original team.

And it's not just Greater Cincinnati that wants more information about Colerain's program.

Meloy is in North Carolina right now promoting the teams. There have also been calls from West Virginia, Texas and northern Ohio.

READ [WCPO's coverage of the heroin epidemic in the Tri-State.](#)