

WCPO rides along with heroin Quick Response Team in Kenton County

New approach to fighting epidemic

KENTON COUNTY, Ky. - It's the new next step after reviving an overdose victim.

First responders go to the families of users, hoping to prevent a repeat - hoping to save a life.

WCPO rode along with the newly-formed Quick Response Team in Kenton County Thursday to see a trending approach to fighting the heroin epidemic.

It's a plan to chip away at the problem one user at a time. The basis for the idea is hope that families will get their loved ones to treatment.

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There have been 20 overdoses so far this year in Kenton County – including four fatalities. A three-person team – police officer, firefighter/paramedic and addiction counselor – started hitting the road to try to reduce those numbers.

One stop was a house where Officer Patrick Noll, Paramedic Joe Rieskamp and counselor Chris Hamilton met the mother of a girl hooked on heroin.

"I went into my bathroom and found her dead and had to call the paramedic," the mother said.

Her daughter girl was revived -- that time.

"You stay up all night waiting for a phone call to identify your child from an overdose," the mother added.

Hamilton urged her to get her daughter into support groups.

"That engagement is very important - staying engaged. I'm in recovery myself, so I get it," said Hamilton of Addiction Services Council. "That's nice. It makes it easy for me to connect with people."

The mother was grateful and had advice for other parents going through the same thing.

"I hope everyone listens to them and gets help -- counseling for even the parents. It's a family thing. It's not just an addict thing," she said.

Then, it was back on the road for a trip to the home of another suspected user.

The mother said he lived elsewhere, but she was glad to hear help is available for the entire family.

"This is not about getting people in trouble. This is about treatment. This is about support. This is about help for the whole community that's struggling," Hamilton said.

That's the routine the team will follow each Thursday -- home visits and offers of hope.

"Now we have the time to speak with family if they're there ... Speak with the

victims if they're there. Sometimes we'll speak with neighbors," said Noll.

"Interdiction hasn't worked. Arresting people hasn't worked. Incarceration doesn't work. Hopefully, this treatment will work," Rieskamp said.

To date, the response has been positive - just like it has been in Colerain Township, the model for the Kenton County team.

In Colerain Township, the QRT team has gotten 80 percent of the users it's contacted into recovery. The Kenton County team hopes to meet or beat those numbers.

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