



Bexley Police Department

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Larry Rinehart
CHIEF OF POLICE

January 11, 2016

To: City of Bexley Council Members

The rise of heroin use in central Ohio has been prominent in the news lately. If you have seen any of the news stories you know that Heroin use is up significantly in Ohio. Heroin overdose deaths have been a daily, tragic result. You may have also seen that the Ohio Attorney General has addressed the issue with several community meetings, television news appearances and a recommendation that law enforcement agencies in Ohio consider carrying the heroin overdose antidote, Narcan (Naloxone),

We have been researching and monitoring the equipping of police agencies with the heroin overdose antidote for over a year. As part of our research we hosted one of the Attorney General's community meetings and I personally completed a course of study provided by the AG on Heroin and the antidote Narcom. However, we have elected to not equip our officers with Narcan at this point for the following reasons:

1. There are no available best practices for the purchase, shelf life, handling requirements and training requirements for Narcan as no central Ohio agency carries the antidote including the Columbus Police Department.
2. The Columbus Fire Department provides a consistently fast response to Bexley calls for service and are fully trained and equipped to identify a heroin overdose and administer the antidote. I recently asked a CFD supervisor from this area what he thought about police officers carrying the heroin antidote. He replied, "The City of Bexley already has a system in place to address the need for Narcan, that system is contracted through The Columbus Division of Fire to provide Fire and EMS protection."
3. Safety and security. Fire personnel are quick to tell you that they rely upon the police department to secure and monitor the scene whenever they are called to any environment where their safety could be a consideration. It is not unusual for environments that welcome heroin use to be high risk environments. The mission of the responding police officer is to keep the scene safe and secure for everyone, including responding medics. Police officers will not turn their back on the environment in order to provide emergency medical treatment in a high risk environment unless there are other officers present to maintain a safe environment. In our location medics are on the scene as quick as back up police officers. This is not always the case in more rural, outlying areas where fire and medic response is further away or volunteer. We are fortunate to have professional, well trained and fast medic response available to us.
4. While we have responded to heroin overdose calls and even overdose deaths, we have not responded to any call where our carry of Narcan could have made any difference.

We responded to two heroin overdoses in 2014 and five in 2015:

2014. One person was found unconscious but later told officers she had taken heroin and was transported by CFD. In the second situation the overdose victim was deceased when we received the call. It was actual a medical doctor who discovered the overdose victim. Unfortunately, one tragic indicator of a heroin overdose is often death. It often happens so quickly that the victim still has the needle in their arm.

2015. One was from a traffic crash. There was no recognizable evidence that the driver was under the influence of heroin to us or to the responding medics. It was not until the driver reached the hospital that it was determined he was under the influence of cocaine and heroin.

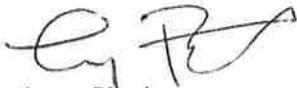
In another overdose call, the victim was found dead in the bathroom by an acquaintance before we were called. CFD arrived within seconds of our police officers.

In another overdose situation the victim was found by an acquaintance. CFD arrived at the same time as officers and administered Narcan.

In the fourth situation the victim was found deceased before we were called and in the fifth situation the victim was given the Narcan antidote by a medical doctor before medics were called. It is not uncommon for people who condone heroin use in their home, especially medical doctors, to keep the Narcan antidote available.

In summary, we will continue to monitor local law enforcement use of Narcan and we will especially look for best and necessary practice. We are an agency with limited resources, and are not best suited to be the first agency (that we are aware of in Ohio) to begin administering Narcan. We would be wise, especially given our good service by CFD, to wait until we observe other agencies with more robust resources than ours determine best practices in training and implementation. For now, we agree with the Columbus Fire medics that we take counsel with; we have a good system of response and trained, professional use of the heroin antidote in our local medic response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'L. Rinehart', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Larry Rinehart
Chief of Police