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TOP STORIES

STEPPING UP FIGHT

Towns are encouraging employees to learn how to give opioid antidote

BY CHRISTINE CHUNG
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As Long Island's opioid crisis persists, municipalities are boosting preventive measures and have increasingly turned to training all staff in how to administer Narcan, a drug used to reverse an overdose.

All towns on Long Island have been training key employees such as emergency medical technicians and public safety officers in the use of Narcan. Now Nassau's three towns — Hempstead, North Hempstead and Oyster Bay — are offering free voluntary training to all town employees.

Town officials said they are responding to a community need and that with many of their employees interacting with the public, it made sense to educate a broader group on how to use the opioid antidote.

"We're so aware that Long Island and in fact the nation is in the grips of opioid crisis," said North Hempstead Town Supervisor Judi Bosworth. "Just like employees are offered training in CPR, why not training in the use of Narcan, which can save a life?"

Narcan, also called naloxone, can be administered by injections or nasal spray. It blocks the effects of drugs such as fentanyl, opium and heroin by attaching to the same parts of the brain that receive opioids.

North Hempstead held its first training with 75 town employees on Friday, in partnership with Northwell Health. Dr. Sandeep Kapoor, assistant professor of medicine at Hofstra Medical School who was one of the training presenters, told the town staff they were "the frontline folks in our community" for helping address opioid addiction, an issue found "everywhere."

Newsday has reported that

as many as 600 Long Islanders died last year from opioid overdoses, according to estimates from county medical examiners. Nationwide, opioids killed more than 42,000 people in 2016, which was more than any year on record, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reported. Deaths nationally have increased by 88 percent per year from 2013 to 2016, the agency reported. The White House last week convened an opioid "summit" to discuss ways to address the problem nationally.

Hempstead Town Councilman Anthony D'Esposito, who runs community Narcan trainings, said the town trainings would build on a network of first responders who know how to handle an overdose.

"It doesn't always have to be your loved one. It could be a complete stranger" who has an overdose, D'Esposito said. "They could be on a bus, at a movie theater, at work, on the beach. If you have those resources and you're able to save a life, why not take a half-hour out of your night and learn how to do it?"

Oyster Bay Town officials have also offered voluntary training sessions to employees and more than 50 have participated since last year, not including public safety officers and bay constables who were trained last summer, officials said.

At North Hempstead's nearly two-hour training for 75 town employees on Friday, three Northwell representatives discussed addiction, treatment options, types of opioids, and how to identify an overdose and properly administer naloxone. At the end of the session, a long line of participants collected the blue Narcan kits, which are stocked with two doses of 4-milligram naloxone nasal sprays, a face mask, gloves and

WHO GETS NARCAN TRAINING

NASSAU

Hempstead: Trains first responders, bay constables and park workers. Holds regular community trainings and town trainings for interested staff.

North Hempstead: Held its first training for any interested staff with plans to possibly hold more for additional employees.

Oyster Bay: Holds community trainings and town trainings for interested staff. Trains public safety officers and bay constables.

SUFFOLK

Babylon: Trains police officers, firefighters, EMTs and Beacon Family Wellness treatment center employees.

Brookhaven: Trains lifeguards, fire marshals, bay constables, some public safety officers.

East Hampton: Trains all first responders, including town police officers and marine patrol.

Huntington: Trains harbor masters, bay constables.

Islip: Trains park rangers, fire marshals.

Riverhead: Trains police officers.

Shelter Island: Trains police officers, EMTs.

Smithtown: Trains public safety officers.

Southampton: Trains town police officers, EMTs.

Southold: Trains town police officers.

instructions.

The Nassau towns are obtaining Narcan kits for free through the New York State Opioid Overdose Prevention Program, which provides registered nonprofits and other organizations such as hospitals with naloxone.

No Suffolk towns offer wide Narcan training for employees, but several town officials said they would consider expanding Narcan trainings to employees.

Southampton Town Supervisor Jay Schneiderman said that in addition to the efforts of the town's dedicated opioid task force, training town employees could be the next step



Narcan kits were given to town

of outreach.

Shelter Island Supervisor Gary Gerth said some town staff have independently opted to get trained and that the town would embrace the opportunity to get wide Narcan training. "It's certainly worthwhile," Gerth said. "In all likelihood, most people will never have to use it, but if you do it'll be critical."

Brookhaven Town spokesman Jack Krieger said that town trains employees such as lifeguards and bay constables but would expand the training for any employees who

