

# Supervisors briefed on local opioid crisis

Nine agencies formed coalition to find gaps in coverage, ways to help

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YORK — The York-Poquoson Sheriff's Office successfully used Narcan to save 27 people since first being trained to use the overdose treatment 18 months ago, according to a presentation given at Tuesday's York County Board of Supervisors meeting.



The opioid crisis was a central subject of the meeting, during which a coalition combating the crisis locally briefed the supervisors.

Courtney Dowell, a spokeswoman from Colonial Behavioral Health, said the agency's coverage area is generally seeing fewer deaths, overdoses and emergency room visits related to opioids than the state average, but the trends are increasing at a similar rate.

Dowell said from 2015 to 2017, 166 doses of Narcan — the brand name of the overdose-reversing drug naloxone — were administered in York County.

Colonial Behavioral Health helps people in York County, Poquoson, James City County and Williamsburg who are fighting addiction, or have a mental illness or developmental disability.

Dowell said it's impossible for one group to address the opioid crisis on its own, so local agencies started working together and formed the Historic Triangle Drug Prevention Coalition.

The coalition consists of nine agencies that work together to find the gaps in their coverage and figure out how they can help fill those gaps. The agencies are focused on both prevention and treatment.

**York-Poquoson Sheriff J.D. Diggs commended people who helped deputies start using Narcan. Diggs said deputies would often arrive to overdose calls before emergency medical services and not be able to do anything.**

Some endeavors of the coalition include helping people get rid of unwanted drugs safely, encouraging compassion when dealing with addiction and educating people about treatment options.

The coalition is growing and has already brought together groups that normally don't work together, said Jan Brown, director of SpiritWorks, an addiction recovery program in Williamsburg.

Brown said it was important to keep trying to get ahead of the problem and intervene with people early. She said the coalition is hoping to work with schools, specifically talking with athletes. Because they're more susceptible to injury, athletes are more likely to be prescribed painkillers and possibly develop a drug dependence, Brown said.

At the meeting, York-Poquoson Sheriff J.D. Diggs also commended people who helped deputies start using Narcan.

Diggs said deputies would often arrive to overdose calls before emergency medical services and not be able to do anything to help the person.

Sue Shekoski, a Sheriff's Office volunteer, suggested deputies be trained to use Narcan and work to figure out how to get the medication, Diggs said. She sought help from SpiritWorks, which helped her find money for the program.

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