



## Wallingford police consider carrying Narcan to prevent overdoses

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**By Eric Vo Record-Journal staff**

WALLINGFORD — A rising number of drug overdoses in the state has prompted Wallingford police to consider equipping officers with Narcan.

“We are looking into it,” police spokesman Lt. Marc Mikulski said, without providing specifics.

Narcan is a prescription drug that can be used to reverse the effects of heroin and other drugs. It blocks opioids from attaching to brain receptors and can be administered intravenously, intramuscularly or through a nasal spray.

The town’s ambulances are equipped with Narcan and paramedics are trained to administer the drug. Because the Police Department isn’t a first responder to calls for medical help, officers aren’t equipped with Narcan.

The number of overdose deaths involving heroin in New Haven County increased 47 percent from 2012 to 2013. The Police Department’s decision to consider Narcan comes after a state trooper saved a person experiencing an overdose in October, just days after every trooper was equipped with the potentially life-saving drug.

There were 355 accidental drug deaths in Connecticut in 2012. In 2013, there were 490 accidental drug deaths, for a 38 percent increase. In the same time, the number of deaths related to heroin overdoses increased from 44 to 65 in New Haven County — a 47.7 percent increase, according to the state.

Of the 355 deaths in 2012, there were 195 cases where heroin, morphine and/or codeine was detected, according to the chief medical examiner’s office. In 2013, there were 284 cases — a 45.6 percent increase.

From 2012 to 2013, the largest increase was seen in deaths that were the result of the combination of heroin and fentanyl, where there was one death in 2012 and nine in 2013. **The rising trend in deaths caused by accidental drug overdoses resulted in the creation of the Coalition for a Better Wallingford more than a year ago. The**

**coalition met with Mayor William W. Dickinson Jr. and Police Chief Douglas Dortenzio in October to discuss training police officers to administer Narcan, according to Ken Welch, a founder of the organization.**

Dortenzio has said in the past that he was waiting for policies and guidelines to be developed at the state level.

**While Welch is glad the Police Department is considering a change, he emphasized the “sooner the better.”**

**“We don’t have the luxury of passing judgment here,” Welch said. “We simply need to do everything we can to solve this problem.”**

Dickinson and Dortenzio couldn’t be reached for comment Thursday.

**Welch noted that historically, the town’s approach to various topics has been “slow.”**

**“You get a little anxious when things don’t happen because we know every day that Narcan is not available for someone, there’s a potential death,” Welch said. Coalition member Larry Morgenstein said he didn’t believe giving police officers access to training to administer Narcan would take long.**

**“Every day that goes by obviously it could mean someone’s life,” Morgenstein said. “I hope they don’t have to use it, but just be prepared.”**

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