

An Open Letter to First Responders

NALOXONE AN OPPORTUNITY TO LIVE

Drug abuse in Ohio has become an epidemic, with unintentional drug overdoses being the leading cause of accidental death in Ohio since 2007, according to the Ohio Department of Health.

Overdose of prescription medications, specifically opiates, are leaving communities across Ohio devastated and placing a strain on law enforcement, criminal justice and Ohio's healthcare resources.

Naloxone is a medication that rapidly reverses the adverse effects of narcotics that contain opioids. In the last three years, Naloxone has been administered more than 40,000 times according to data from the Emergency Medical Incidence Reporting System.

*By John Born
Director, Ohio Department of Public Safety*

What if I told you that you could give someone the opportunity to live?

That's a pretty powerful thing to consider. Not to just save a life, but to actually give someone the opportunity to live.

And that's precisely what you, as a first responder, can do by utilizing Naloxone (sold under the brand name Narcan).

Facing a patient who has overdosed on heroin, your ability to offer rapid treatment for that patient is truly a matter of life and death; and the recent Ohio Revised Code changes allowing Naloxone administration has proved beneficial in the fight against Ohio's drug overdose issues. Although temporary, the rapid and effective treatment given by police officers, firefighters, EMTs and other first responders opens the door to a much needed opportunity for long-term care and rehabilitation for the patient.

While the resurgence of heroin abuse has created a challenge for all of our EMS, law enforcement, and healthcare professionals, when you respond to a person struggling with the demon of addiction, a valuable life hangs in a delicate balance. In that moment you can become a first preventer.

A positive outcome versus a heartbreaking tragedy might be determined by the availability of rapid administered Naloxone.

Naloxone in your hands has proven to be a critical life-sparing factor that is applicable to every sector of our society and contributes to the safety of every community.

Your training has prepared you to render assistance to those most in need during emergency situations. I know across Ohio, from the police officer in Lima, to the EMT in Jackson, to the firefighter in Akron, all first responders take their role seriously and strive to not just help raise the quality of care that Ohioans receive, but to also raise the quality of life in the communities in which you serve and live. You are greatly appreciated.

It's an amazing thing when you change the paradigm from seeing yourself as a first responder to seeing yourself as a first preventer — that you see the opportunity to positively change the course of events for a person, a family, and a circle of friends in such a meaningful way.

You already provide critical, lifesaving care to those in need 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Despite the risks that you may face while responding, you remain dedicated to helping the patient.

I know every day you and your colleagues fearlessly enter emergency situations, quickly assess and decide what needs to be done to save a mother, a father, or a child. Through your actions, each of these people is given the opportunity to live. And now just think about the possibilities each of these people has to contribute to a better Ohio, and a better nation.

To the thousands of first preventers in Ohio, who provide an essential community service every day, I encourage you to expeditiously utilize Naloxone when appropriate to those who can be given an opportunity to live.