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SFPD Reports Continued Success with Opiate Overdose Reversals

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Over the past five years, the San Francisco Police Department has partnered with the San Francisco Department of Public Health and the Harm Reduction Coalition's Drug Overdose Prevention and Education (DOPE) project. The collaboration began as an initiative to equip San Francisco Police officers with Naloxone Hydrochloride kits (Narcan) in an effort to combat opioid-related overdoses in San Francisco. When administered properly Narcan reverses the effects of an opioid overdose. Similar to Automated External Defibrillators, the program intended to provide first responders with another tool that could potentially save lives.

In March of 2015 the SFPD launched a pilot program that put Narcan in SFPD vehicles patrolling the Metro Division. Officers were trained on how to recognize life-threatening opioid overdoses from such drugs as heroin and prescription painkillers and how to administer the intranasal Narcan as an antidote. Recognizing its success, the program was expanded department-wide in April of 2017. Today all SFPD patrol vehicles are equipped with Narcan kits.

In 2015, officers successfully administered Narcan in three incidents. Officers successfully administered Narcan 21 times in 2016, 28 times in 2017, 74 times in 2018 and 135 times in 2019. Through July of 2020 officers have administered Narcan 148 times. In 2018 there were 259 overdose deaths in San Francisco. That number increased to 441 in 2019. Through September of 2020 there have been 516 overdose deaths.

Narcan kits have become an extremely useful tool for officers in safeguarding lives. Prompt screening and assignment of 9-1-1 calls by Department of Emergency Management dispatchers and early intervention by SFPD officers equipped with Narcan kits, combined with skilled care and transport by paramedics to an emergency room all increase the chances of survival for an overdose victim.

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