

Enfield eyes Manchester opioid effort

By Will Healey
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ENFIELD — The success of an innovative approach to attacking the opioid crisis adopted by the town of Manchester has Enfield police Capt. Fred Hall excited about the possibility of replicating the program in Enfield.

Manchester's HOPE Initiative — a partnership of the Manchester Police Department, area hospitals, treatment centers, and social service organizations — was the topic of discussion Tuesday at the quarterly meeting of the North Central Opioid Addiction Task Force at Enfield Town Hall.

Manchester Police Chief Marc Montminy told the more than 30 regional representatives at the meeting that the initiative, launched a year ago, has been making a difference. Though quantifiable numbers are hard to come by, Montminy said that of the 35 people entered into the HOPE program, three have notified the Police Department that they've stuck with treatment, and one person even invited Montminy to a ceremony marking one year of sobriety.



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Manchester Police Chief Marc Montminy addresses the North Central Opioid Addiction Task Force on Tuesday at Enfield Town Hall on the efforts of the Manchester HOPE Initiative to address the opioid issue.

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Stakeholders from across the region listen as Manchester Police Chief Marc Montminy addresses the North Central Opioid Addiction Task Force on Tuesday at Enfield Town Hall on his town's efforts to combat the opioid issue.

Lack of hospital a challenge for Enfield opioid effort

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Montminy explained that the HOPE Initiative was launched after a concerned citizen, Sarah Howroyd—who battled opioid addiction herself and is now in recovery—asked what the department was doing to address the opioid problem. Like the state, which Montminy noted had seen a 192 percent increase in heroin-related deaths from 2012-2016, Manchester also saw a dramatic increase in heroin-related deaths, from seven in 2012 to 21 in 2016, or a 300 percent increase.

Montminy said he focused on the Gloucester, Massachusetts Police Department's successful "Angel Program," which uses police officers' role as the first point of contact with opiate users. If a person wants help, the department, rather than arresting the person, will contact hospitals or treatment centers to get the person the help they need.

"The Police Department needs to become the entry point to the recovery system rather

than the criminal justice system," Montminy said.

After getting the blessing of the State's Attorney's Office, the next step was taking inventory of existing treatment assets in town and nearby. He said Manchester Memorial Hospital was willing to take anyone the department brought in, as did St. Francis Hospital & Medical Center in Hartford.

Montminy said the department's other core partners in the initiative are Manchester Human Services, the Manchester branch of Community Health Resources, which provides dual-diagnosis treatment and Suboxone treatment, Hartford Dispensary, which provides Methadone treatment, and the Connecticut Community for Addiction Recovery, which provides grant-funded recovery coaches.

Montminy said the other prong of the HOPE Initiative is education, and he said he and Howroyd have presented to every high school student in Manchester, and have coordinated local events and social media campaigns.

After the presentation, Hall

described the efforts the Enfield Police Department has undertaken. The department has partnered with Enfield Youth Services and the Enfield Together Coalition on educational programs, and has published a booklet outlining available services which they attempt to give to addicted people with whom they come into contact.

Hall was optimistic that a program can be implemented in Enfield, though he admitted it would be slightly harder with no hospital in town. Nevertheless, he said he was interested in reaching out to Johnson Memorial Hospital in Stafford or St. Francis about a possible partnership.

Staff members of Enfield's branch of Community Health Services, at 153 Hazard Ave., were in attendance. Clinical Director Marisol Tromley said they have a Methadone clinic onsite, and a Suboxone program. She said they accept walk-ins, do in-takes, and have recovery specialists and life recovery coaches onsite. For more information, call 860-253-5020.