



BROOME COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

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BROOME COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE PRESS RELEASE

Sheriff Introduces New "Fentanyl Fighter" Pilot Program to Save Lives

(TOWN OF DICKINSON) Broome County Sheriff's Deputies and Corrections Officers are now equipped with a new tool to help save lives and prevent overdose deaths both in the Broome County Correctional Facility and in the community.

Starting on April 22, 2024, a new FDA-approved opioid antagonist will be carried in addition to Narcan (naloxone) by select members of the Broome County Sheriff's Road Patrol and the Corrections divisions as part of a pilot program.

The new "Fentanyl Fighter," Opvee (nalmefene), is a nasal spray designed to reverse the effects of an opioid overdose and quickly help restore blood pressure, breathing and consciousness to those experiencing a potentially fatal overdose. Opvee's application is nearly identical to Narcan but is being introduced specifically to help treat synthetic opioid overdoses.

"For over 15 years, combating the opioid crisis that has ravaged our communities has been a personal priority for me, both in law enforcement and as a member of the New York State Senate," said Sheriff Fred Akshar. "Ten years ago, I joined countless advocates across our state in supporting the introduction of Narcan to save lives and prevent overdose deaths across New York State. Today, it's clear that the landscape has changed and our community needs to utilize as many tools as we can to save lives and fight back."

Rise of Fentanyl and other Synthetic Opioids

Sheriff Akshar referred to the raw data reported in the New York State Department of Health (NYSDOH)'s [2023 Opioid Annual Data Report](#). The report shows that from 2015-2021, opioid overdose deaths in New York involving synthetic opioids increased from 30.8% to 91.6%, a total increase of 197.4%.ⁱ

"In less than a decade, fentanyl has completely upended the fight to save lives from addiction," said Sheriff Akshar. "Fentanyl is now not only found widely in heroin and opioids, but

frequently found in methamphetamine, cocaine and other drugs, further contributing to the continued increase overdoses. If we are to stay ahead, or more accurately catch up with the changing landscape, we must adapt, modernize and explore new ways of meeting these challenges.”

Since 2015, the NYSDOH reports that New York has significantly outpaced the nation in overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids. Currently, Broome County ranks 4th out of 62 New York counties when it comes to opioid deaths involving any opioid per 100,000 population and 5th regarding overdose deaths involving synthetic opioids. ⁱ

Multiple Doses of Narcan Needed

NYSDOH also noted the need to use multiple doses of naloxone to revive individuals who have overdosed on substances containing fentanyl:

In the [report](#), the NYSDOH states that “Opioid-related overdose deaths have increasingly involved fentanyl... **Due to the potency of these substances, multiple doses of naloxone, a drug that can reverse the effects of an opioid overdose, are often required to revive individuals who have overdosed on fentanyl or fentanyl analogs**, particularly when additional substances such as xylazine may also be present.”ⁱ

“According to annual overdose reports from Broome County, nearly all reported uses of naloxone over the past several years involved deploying multiple doses to revive individuals,” said Sheriff Akshar. “If new products like Opvee can help quickly restore breathing, blood pressure and reverse overdose effects in a single dose, it only makes sense that we add this tool to our toolbox in the fight against the scourge of fentanyl.”

FDA Approval of Opvee

In May 2023, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) approved Opvee, the first nalmefene hydrochloride nasal spray for the emergency treatment of suspected opioid overdoses. According to the FDA, approval of Opvee was supported by safety and pharmacokinetic studies, as well as a study in people who use opioids recreationally to assess how quickly the drug works. ⁱⁱ

According to the FDA, “If nalmefene is administered quickly, it can reverse the effects of opioid overdose, including respiratory depression, sedation and low blood pressure.” ⁱⁱ

When announcing the approval, FDA Commissioner Robert M. Califf, M.D. stated, “The agency continues to advance the FDA Overdose Prevention Framework and take actionable steps that encourage harm reduction by supporting the development of novel overdose reversal

products. On the heels of the FDA’s recent approval of the first over-the-counter opioid reversal agent, the availability of nalmeferene nasal spray places a new prescription opioid reversal option in the hands of communities, harm reduction groups and emergency responders.”ⁱⁱ

Early Successes in Michigan

Since FDA approval, Opvee was deployed in by the Oakland County Sheriff’s Office in Michigan in November, 2023. In January the Oakland Sheriff reported that Opvee had already saved 26 lives by reversing overdoses and restoring normal breathing within one to one and a half minutes after being administered.ⁱⁱⁱ

“We’ve seen the early success of this product in Michigan, and it only made sense for us to lead the way in New York and bring this life-saving tool to the Broome County Sheriff’s Office,” said Sheriff Fred Akshar.

Deployment in Broome County

Starting on Monday, April 22, 2023, the Broome County Sheriff’s Office Road Patrols will begin carrying Opvee nasal spray along with Narcan during road patrol shifts and Corrections Officers will have ready access to Opvee in the Intake and Medical areas of the Broome County Correctional Facility. All deputies and corrections officers with access to Opvee have been trained both on the proper deployment of Opvee and on collecting real-world data after deployment to track success.

“For the past decade, the State of New York has had a standing order for the use of Narcan and only Narcan to combat overdoses in the field,” said Sheriff Fred Akshar. “It’s easy to talk about the need to modernize the tools available to save lives, but we have the FDA-approved tools to fight fentanyl. Now is the time to act.”

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ⁱ New York State Department of Health. New York State Opioid Annual Report 2023
https://www.health.ny.gov/statistics/opioid/data/pdf/nys_opioid_annual_report_2023.pdf

ⁱⁱ U.S. Food and Drug Administration. FDA Approves Prescription Nasal Spray to Reverse Opioid Overdose
<https://www.fda.gov/news-events/press-announcements/fda-approves-prescription-nasal-spray-reverse-opioid-overdose>

ⁱⁱⁱ <https://www.fox2detroit.com/news/oakland-county-deputies-reverse-26-overdoses-with-opvee-which-works-on-fentanyl>