

**MOTION BY SUPERVISORS KATHRYN BARGER AND  
MARK RIDLEY-THOMAS**

**June 27, 2017**

**OPIOID OVERDOSE PROGRAM / U-C.A.N. (Conquer Addiction Now)**

According to the Centers for Disease Control (CDC), drug overdose continues to be on the rise in the United States.<sup>1</sup> Since 1999, drug overdose deaths related to illegal opioids, prescription opioids, and heroin have quadrupled. Each day in the United States, 91 Americans die from overdose of opioid related drugs like oxycodone, hydrocodone, and methadone.

According to the Department of Public Health, drug overdose was the fourth leading cause of premature death in Los Angeles County in 2013.<sup>2</sup> There were nearly as many drug overdoses as there were motor vehicle crashes. A coroner-based surveillance system used to monitor drug-related deaths reported that between 2000 and 2009 there were 8,265 drug related deaths in Los Angeles County. In addition, there were over 14 million prescriptions issued for opioids between 2007 and 2012.

While many may often associate drug abuse and drug overdose with younger individuals, a recent bulletin from the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) reported that 2.7 million Americans over the age of 50 abused pain killers, and in 2015 one-third of all Medicare patients, nearly 12 million older adults, were prescribed opioid pain killers.<sup>3</sup> Additionally, the AARP report indicates that nearly 14,000 people age 45-plus died from an opioid overdose in that same year.

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MOTION

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<sup>1</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/index.html>

<sup>2</sup> Los Angeles County Department of Public Health – October 2016  
<http://publichealth.lacounty.gov/dca/data/documents/mortalityrpt13.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> June 2017 AARP Bulletin  
<http://www.aarp.org/health/drugs-supplements/info-2017/opioid-drug-addiction-pain-pills.html>

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The CDC reports that the opioid epidemic is most critical in the Mid-West and New England States.<sup>4</sup> However, states in the western part of the nation are not far behind with opioid deaths including a rise in Arizona, Nevada, and Oregon. While Los Angeles County is in an opioid crisis, we have not yet reached an “*epidemic*” level of devastation, but public health data regarding emergency department visits, hospitalizations, and treatment admissions suggest that the epidemic may be heading our way.

On June 15, 2017, Los Angeles County Sheriff Jim McDonnell announced a pilot program that will allow deputies to carry intranasal naloxone, commonly known as Narcan, to combat opioid overdoses. According to the National Institute of Health (NIH)<sup>5</sup>, naloxone is a medication that reverses respiratory depression resulting from an opioid overdose caused by drugs like heroin, fentanyl, and oxycodone. The Department supplied 1,200 doses of Narcan which will be dispensed in the form of a nasal spray. The pilot program will begin in Santa Clarita, La Crescenta, East Los Angeles, Community College Bureau, and Parks Bureau.

In addition, the Department of Public Health awarded the Sheriff’s Department a grant supplying them with 5,000 doses of Narcan, which will be delivered to deputies throughout Los Angeles County in the coming months.

On a daily basis, law enforcement personnel are the first to arrive at the scene of an emergency incident. When this incident involves an overdose due to opioid use, immediate treatment can make the difference between life and death. The ability for deputies to dispense Narcan will save many lives in Los Angeles County.

The Sheriff’s Department, in conjunction with Department of Health Services, is now training their deputies to administer this medication in the field to save lives. The training is simple; the medication has few negative side effects, and can be safely administered by laypeople and law enforcement officers.

We applaud the Sheriff’s Department for taking the steps necessary to equip deputies with naloxone to save lives. It is incumbent upon the County to be aware of this threat and to work collaboratively to reach vulnerable populations and insulate our County from the devastation experienced in other parts of the Country.

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<sup>4</sup> Centers for Disease Control and Prevention <https://www.cdc.gov/drugoverdose/index.html>

<sup>5</sup> National Institute of Health <https://www.drugabuse.gov/related-topics/opioid-overdose-reversal-naloxone-narcan-evzio>

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**WE, THEREFORE, MOVE THAT THE BOARD OF SUPERVISORS:**

- 1) Direct the CEO to establish **U-C.A.N.(Conquer Addiction Now)**, a working group to specifically examine drug overdose and deaths related to opioids in Los Angeles County and include in the working group the Health Agency, Sheriff's Department, Fire Department, SAFE MED LA, and other relevant agencies and organizations;
- 2) Examine avenues for grants and ongoing funding options to ensure the Sheriff's Department will have adequate supplies of naloxone to distribute to deputies throughout Los Angeles County;
- 3) Develop a mechanism for programs and services locally that allows people with substance use disorders to report to safe locations to receive immediate help, including immediate transport to withdrawal management and treatment facilities;
- 4) Develop a marketing, education and outreach campaign, and identify funding to prevent the misuse of all drugs, with a focus on the abuse of opioids in vulnerable populations, as well as a focus encouraging people with substance use disorder to seek immediate help in safe locations;
- 5) Direct the identified and relevant agencies to analyze the geographical areas with the highest rate of death and abuse related to opioids and recommendations to strategically distribute naloxone resources to these identified locations;
- 6) Provide a written report to the Board in 60 days with follow up reports every 90 days thereafter providing innovative solutions, services and programs that successfully accomplish the stated goals.

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