

# **New Bedford Police Department LEAD team expands to meet overdose concerns**

NBPD enhances reach to those in need of addiction services; Recovery coaches onboard at department making connections across the city.

Twenty-seven people have died from overdoses in New Bedford so far this year. That's 27 too many for the New Bedford Police Dept. which has recently expanded efforts to connect those in need with addiction and recovery services.

A team of two recovery coaches and a project manager is now in place at the department to support the Law Enforcement Assisted Diversion (LEAD) program. LEAD is a collaborative program between the NBPD, Bristol County District Attorney and Seven Hills Behavioral Health. It's aimed at reducing low-level crimes by addressing the underlying causations like drug use. The team also supports outreach efforts in New Bedford associated with overdoses.



After a spike in overdose deaths in January 2019, the need to approach the problem of addiction in a different way became evident, says Chief Joseph Cordeiro. "When recovery coaches and officers partner to tackle the same issue we make a difference and the data is proving it." Since the program began in 2018, there have 45 individuals diverted to services and avoided law violations. Of those 45, 12 have been diverted since the team has been in place the past few weeks.

"We need progressive and innovative approaches to the opioid epidemic," Cordeiro said. "As a police department we play an important leadership role that positions us to identify when someone needs assistance for addiction." Providing the option of diversion through our recovery coaches reduces taxpayer costs while facilitating the treatment of those in need," said Cordeiro. "We can reduce crime and the individual gets clean," adds Cordeiro.

Recovery coaches connect individuals at risk for overdose

and/or survivors of a non-fatal overdose and their families with substance abuse and behavioral health treatment providers or peer recovery support providers trained in addiction support and recovery. The LEAD program here in 2018 with a part-time recovery coach at the department provided by the Police Assisted Addiction and Recovery Initiative (PAARI) and AmeriCorps. Its expanded program is funded by the US Dept. of Justice under the Comprehensive Opioid Abuse Site-based Program.

Referrals to the program's services come from our officers, drug court and the community. If you or someone you know could benefit from this service, please call Natasha Patricio at the NBPD 508-6300 Ext. 79470.