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For immediate release



Probation officers approved to carry anti-opioid medication

The timing wasn't lost on Dante Hummel-Langerfeld.

The Board of Commissioners on Tuesday approved a policy allowing Rice County probation officers to carry and administer the anti-opioid naloxone, a decision county leaders believe will save lives. While May is [National Treatment Court Month](#), Tuesday was also [National Fentanyl Awareness Day](#).

County officials, including Behavioral Health Unit Supervisor Hummel-Langerfeld and Community Corrections Manager Angela Brewer, say that having probation officers carry the medication is a response to the ever-increasing availability of strong opioids like fentanyl which often lead to an overdose.

Naloxone, also known by the brand name Narcan, "is a life-saving medication that can reverse an overdose from opioids — including heroin, fentanyl and prescription opioid medications — when given in time," according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

Local first responders, including law enforcement, EMTs and fire fighters have carried naloxone for years and report using the medication with increasing frequency. It is also available at many area pharmacies without a prescription.

Probation officers' work often puts them in contact with those dealing with substance abuse disorder. Opioid use can be especially dangerous for those who've been sober, like those recently released from prison or jail and are on probation, and have a reduced tolerance to the quantity of drugs they previously used.

The medication probation officers will carry is easy to carry and administer. All county employees who carry the medication will be trained to recognize signs of opioid overdose, and per Minnesota statute, administered according to protocols specified by the prescriber.

"It is safe," Hummel-Langerfeld told the board during its May 2 meeting. "If naloxone were to be administered to someone who is not experiencing an overdose ... there are no harmful outcomes."

The medication, its use and the circumstances of the use will be tracked. The new policy requires any administration of naloxone to be reported to the county.

"I would really encourage you to consider this as a positive step for the Probation staff. Throughout my entire career in Rice County opioid abuse has been a long-standing problem, particularly with heroin and then in pill form and now with fentanyl....," Brewer said during the May 2 meeting.



Rice County probation officers will soon be able to carry and administer an anti-opioid used to treat people experiencing an opioid overdose. (Rice County photo)

Because probation officers are in the community and often make unannounced visits to clients, having this tool is of utmost importance, she added later.

“This could help them save a life,” she said. “And that matters.”

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