

Police Chief: Heroin Use is Up in Darien, What Parents Can Do

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Heroin is cheap in Darien and the region, is available to youth, and in fighting it the "best tool we can possibly have in this battle is an engaged and active parent who knows what's going on in their kids' lives," Police Chief Duane Lovello says.

"We do have investigations going on right now, as we speak, into heroin 'trafficking,' so to speak and use here in Darien," he told the Police Commission on Wednesday.

"We are seeing a significant uptick in heroin usage," he continued. "We are seeing more of it being marketed in Darien, we are seeing more of it being used in Darien. [...] That's not just affecting Darien, but it's affecting [...] the entire Northeast."

"It's in every school district, and any school district that wants to deny it, I think, is kidding themselves."

Lower price, higher demand

The increase seems to be largely driven by the lower price of heroin, he said. "It's very cheap right now. It's far less expensive than pharmaceuticals."

A couple of years ago, Lovello said, police were focusing more on prescription medications like Oxycodone and Vicodin (which are prescription pain-killers containing an opioid, a compound similar to the opium in heroin).

But he said heroin is now between 10 percent and a third of what it costs to buy Oxycodone and Vicodin, he

said. The street price for those medications is roughly \$1 per milligram, or \$60 for a 60-mg pill. "You can get a bag of heroin, if you want to travel down to the Bronx, for six or seven dollars. If you want to pay for it up here, it will cost you between \$10 and \$20.

Heroin "is here. It's in every school district," the police chief said.

What parents can do

"We have been trying to increase the amount of community conversation taking place," Lovello said. "We had the recent session at the Depot where we talked about the heroin problem in Darien, and that was attended by a bunch of parents. We are going to have a larger session coming up shortly at Darien Town Hall where we want to continue that discussion, so I'm thankful that the Depot [is] kind of spearheading that."

UPDATE: *Here's information on an upcoming presentation for parents from The Depot youth center and Darien police on dealing with drugs:*

StraightTalk — Lifting the Veil: Facing the Hidden Drug Epidemic in Darien, Part 2

Thursday, Nov. 5, 7 to 8:30 p.m. at Town Hall:

Continue the discussion about the rise of heroin abuse in our small town with a professional panel: Ingrid Gillespie - Communities4Action, Roody Joseph, M.Ed., LPC - Center for Discovery and Change, Rob DiRoma, MSW, LADC - Center for Discovery and Change, John Douglas, M.D. - Silver Hill Hospital, Officer Michael Cummings - Darien Police Department, Sergeant TJ Whyte - Darien Police Department, and Nick deSpoelberch, Recovery Speaker.

"If we can just get parents to stay actively involved in their kids lives and to actively inquire when they see something that's out of the norm, and to know what to look for — and that's what these sessions at the Depot and Town Hall are geared to do — we're going to show you what you should be looking for, what, maybe, personality changes might tip you off, what the various bundling [packaging of heroin] looks like, what kids are using to ingest it. [...]"

Your kids value their privacy — but Lovello said that it's OK to violate it.

"Don't be afraid to snoop around a little bit. I mean, everybody wants to respect their child's privacy, but at the same time, if you're giving them a car to use and it's for their exclusive use, you should be looking into the car once in a while to see what's in it. You should be looking in their bedroom to see what's going on in their bedroom.

"It's responsible parenting, especially when you're up against a problem that your child might not be able to deal with on their own. They need all the help they can get. If that means you've got to snoop a little bit, I'm all for that."

Police Department may have some new tools

Darien police are considering two more ways to deal with heroin use in town.

The department's K-9 dog, Zulu, recently sniff for illegal drugs at Wilton High School at the request of Wilton Police Department. The search wasn't in response to a particular incident, Lovello said — just a way of examining the building to see if students had drugs there.

Similar "sweeps" have been done at high schools in New Canaan, Bethel and Greenwich, the police chief said. Darien High School hasn't had a similar sweep, he said, but school and town officials are "looking at the idea."

Police are actively studying the introduction of naloxone to patrol cars and Police Headquarters. An overdose from heroin or some other opiod can often be reversed very quickly with the drug, saving a life, according to [a February 2014 report in USA Today](#).

The drug has increasingly been used by police across the country. New York City police started carrying naloxone regularly in 2014, according to [a Reuters report](#).