

Collier deputies starting carrying Narcan last year and opioid overdoses have dropped sharply

[Jake Allen](#), Fort Myers News-Press Published 9:41 a.m. ET April 16, 2019 LOSE

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Collier County Sheriff's deputies began carrying Narcan, an opioid antagonist, in July to save lives — and it appears to be working.

Fatal overdoses in Collier have fallen dramatically since deputies began carrying the drug on July 27, 2018.

From the beginning of 2018 to the date of Narcan deployment, the sheriff's office tracked 28 fatal overdoses.



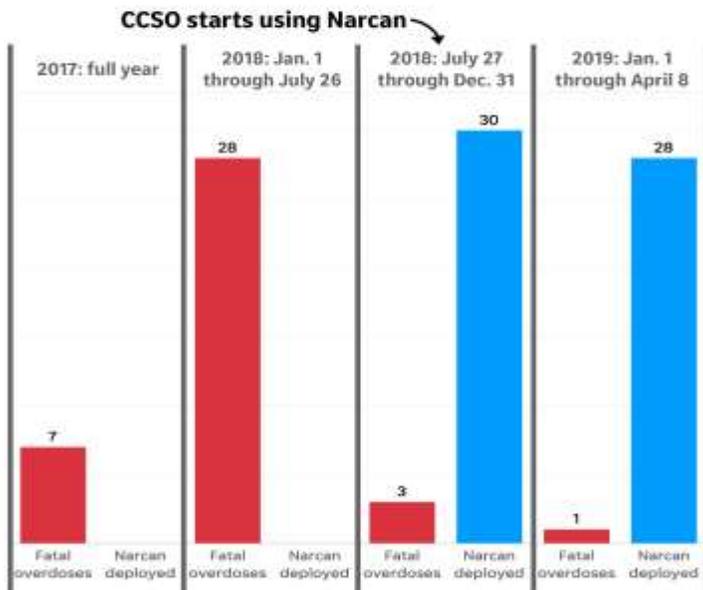
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Boxes of Narcan, an overdose antidote sit near at hand in a North Fort Myers motel room where IV drug users are staying. The Narcan is provided to them by Ramona Miller of A Voice in the Wilderness. (Photo: Andrew West/The News-Press)

From July 27 until the end of 2018, it tracked three fatal overdoses.

In 2019, the sheriff's office has tracked 79 overdoses and has used Narcan at 28. One overdose was fatal.

Overdose deaths* and Narcan deployment by the Collier County Sheriff's Office (CCSO)



*Includes only overdoses responded to by the CCSO.

Source: Collier County Sheriff's Office

Graphic by [Janie Haseman](#) / Naples Daily News

The data CCSO collects is for incorporated areas of Collier County, which means the agency does not collect data from the cities of Marco Island or Naples, Lt. John Poling said.

The sheriff's office is often unable to log some scenarios, such as patients who arrive at hospitals in private vehicles, Poling said.

More: [Ex-paramedic teaches FSW students about opioid addiction, Narcan, and stigma](#)

What is Narcan?

Narcan is the brand name of a drug called naloxone that reverses the effects of opioids, according to the Florida Department of Children and Families Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health.

Opioids include opium, morphine, codeine, heroin hydromorphone, hydrocodone, oxycodone, fentanyl and methadone, according to DCF's Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health.

Collier's overdose tracking data does include some non-opioid overdoses, where Narcan would not be effective, Poling said.

Paramedics have used Narcan for more than 40 years, and it cannot be abused or cause overdoses. If it is administered to someone not overdosing on opioids, it has no adverse effects, according to DCF's Office of Substance Abuse and Mental Health.

In Collier County, Narcan is deployed at any calls reported as overdose-related, as well medical calls where a deputy has reason to believe a person could be overdosing on opioids, Poling said.

Who carries Narcan?

Members of the Florida Highway Patrol in Broward, Palm Beach, St. Lucie, Martin and Indian River counties began carrying Narcan in early 2018, and the agency planned to issue Narcan to troopers in other areas of the state by the end of February 2018.

Lt. Greg Bueno said FHP troopers in Southwest Florida have been issued and are carrying Narcan.

Nanette Schimpf, public information officer for the Florida Sheriff's Association, said carrying the drug among sheriff's offices is so popular that the association no longer keeps track of which agencies are carrying and which are not.

There are several funding methods, including grants, that have made it easier for sheriff's offices to afford Narcan, Schimpf said.

More: [The opioid diaries: In Naples, a horse named Tacoma](#)

The cost for a two-dose kit of Narcan is between \$35 and \$40, Poling said.

However, members of the Lee County Sheriff's Office, Marco Island Police Department and Naples Police Department do not carry Narcan.

Marco Island Police Capt. David Baer said his officers don't carry the drug based on the size of the island and the immediate availability of Narcan from allied public safety professionals.

Marco Island police partner with Collier EMS and Marco Island Fire Rescue, which have stations on the island and members that carry Narcan, Baer said.

Lt. Matthew Fletcher of the Naples Police Department said Narcan is carried by city of Naples firefighters and Collier County EMS units, who respond to medical rescue calls within the city of Naples.

Members of the Lee County Sheriff Office's public information office declined to answer questions about why the agency does not have its deputies carry Narcan.

In response to a public records request, the public information office said it is “exploring” the usage of Narcan.

Where are opioid overdoses occurring?

Opioid deaths nationwide have been increasing since at least 1999, according to data from the federal [Centers For Disease Control and Prevention](#).

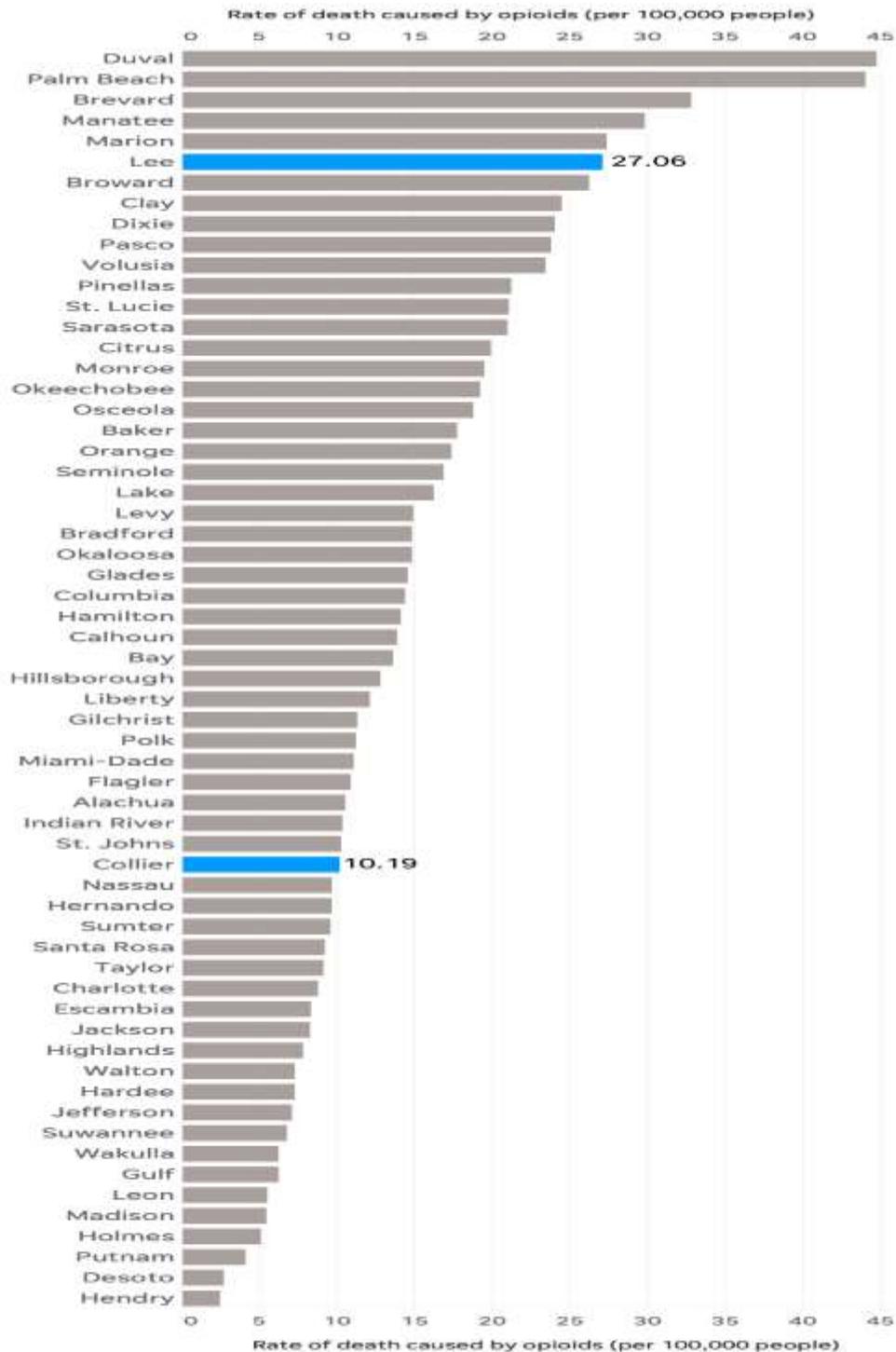
From 2007 to 2017, the number of overdose deaths involving any opioid increased 157 percent nationwide, from 18,515 deaths to 47,600, according to the CDC.

The number of opioid-caused deaths in Florida increased by 9 percent in 2017, according to the latest data from the [Florida Medical Examiners Commission’s drugs identified in deceased persons report](#).

The report was released in November 2018 and compares data from 2017 to 2016.

Opioid overdose deaths are more prevalent in Lee County compared to Collier County, according to the data. Lee County has a larger population.

Opioid death rates in Florida counties



Includes deaths caused by buprenorphine, codeine, fentanyl, fentanyl analogs, heroin, hydrocodone, hydromorphone, meperidine, methadone, morphine, oxycodone, oxymorphone, and tramadol.

Source: Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons by Florida Medical Examiners, 2017 (Florida Department of Law Enforcement)

Graphic by [Janie Haseman](#) / Naples Daily News

In 2017, before Collier deputies began carrying Narcan, Collier County had 38 deaths caused by opioids, while Lee County had 200, according to the Florida Medical Examiners Commission report.

Even when taking into account population, however, Lee County fared worse than Collier — its 2017 rate of deaths caused by opioids was 27.06 per 100,000 people, while Collier's was less than half, 10.19 per 100,000 people.

In fact, Lee County had one of the highest rates of deaths caused by opioids in Florida — it ranked sixth out of 67, while Collier ranked 40th.

Narcan roadblocks

The biggest roadblock Collier County Sheriff's Office faced when it was considering whether it should issue Narcan to its members was that of storage, Poling said.

The drug has a two-year shelf-life, must be kept out of direct sunlight and should be stored between 59-77 degrees.

The concern related to the ability of CCSO deputies to maintain and properly store the drug on and off duty, Poling said.

However, since members first started carrying Narcan about eight months ago, the department has seen no negative impacts, Poling said.

Units that carry Narcan include the patrol, special operations and prisoner transport deputies units, Poling said.

In most cases, the person who has overdosed and the person reporting the overdose are protected from arrest under the Good Samaritan Act, Poling said.

The majority of patients to whom deputies administer Narcan are transported to a hospital for treatment and monitoring by Emergency Medical Services, while some refuse in-hospital treatment, Poling said.

Naples Daily News reporter Janie Haseman contributed to this report.