

Marietta first responders announce overdose response team

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In 2018, 100 opioid overdose victims in Marietta were revived with Naloxone, a drug carried by Marietta Police, Marietta Fire and paramedics.

Starting this week, those overdose survivors will have a new source of help, thanks to a partnership between Marietta Police, Marietta Fire, Metro Ambulance Service and Davis Direction, a Marietta-based organization dedicated to fighting opioid addiction.

The group is called ASSIST, short for the Active Substance Support Intervention Solutions Team.

Also known by the trade name Narcan, Naloxone comes as an injection or nasal spray, and can quickly counteract opioids, potentially saving victims from a fatal overdose. When someone calls 911 to report an overdose, Georgia law protects both the caller and the victim from arrest. Narcan is also available over the counter.

The ASSIST group members will receive alerts any time a first responder revives someone using Naloxone in the city. Within 24 hours of each alert, two plainclothes police officers will pay a visit to each surviving individual and try to persuade them to seek treatment and recovery.

“As part of the ASSIST project, involved police officers and firefighters will receive sensitivity training from Davis Direction in the vernacular of opioid addicts, so as not to use off-putting terms or trigger words and terms that may interfere with the desired dialogue,” said Marietta Police spokesman Officer Chuck McPhilamy in a statement.

The officers will leave every person they visit with a packet of information provided by Davis Direction that lists resources for getting help.

For those who say they want help, ASSIST will remain in contact to meet and discuss recovery in one-on-one conversations. Participation is anonymous.

Davis Direction’s founder and executive director Missy Owen said she’s proud to be a part of the pilot program.

“We’re just excited that we have a seat at the table,” she said. “And I’m very excited that we’re going to be able to do the sensitivity training, teaching people the correct vocabulary and the ways to reach out appropriately.”

The announcement comes less than a month after Chief Dan Flynn announced the department was pulling out of the Marietta-Cobb-Smyrna Organized Crime Unit, which investigates narcotics trafficking in Cobb.