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## **MEDIA RELEASE SEPTEMBER 30, 2017**

### **HEROIN OVERDOSES RISE FOR THIRD YEAR IN A ROW**

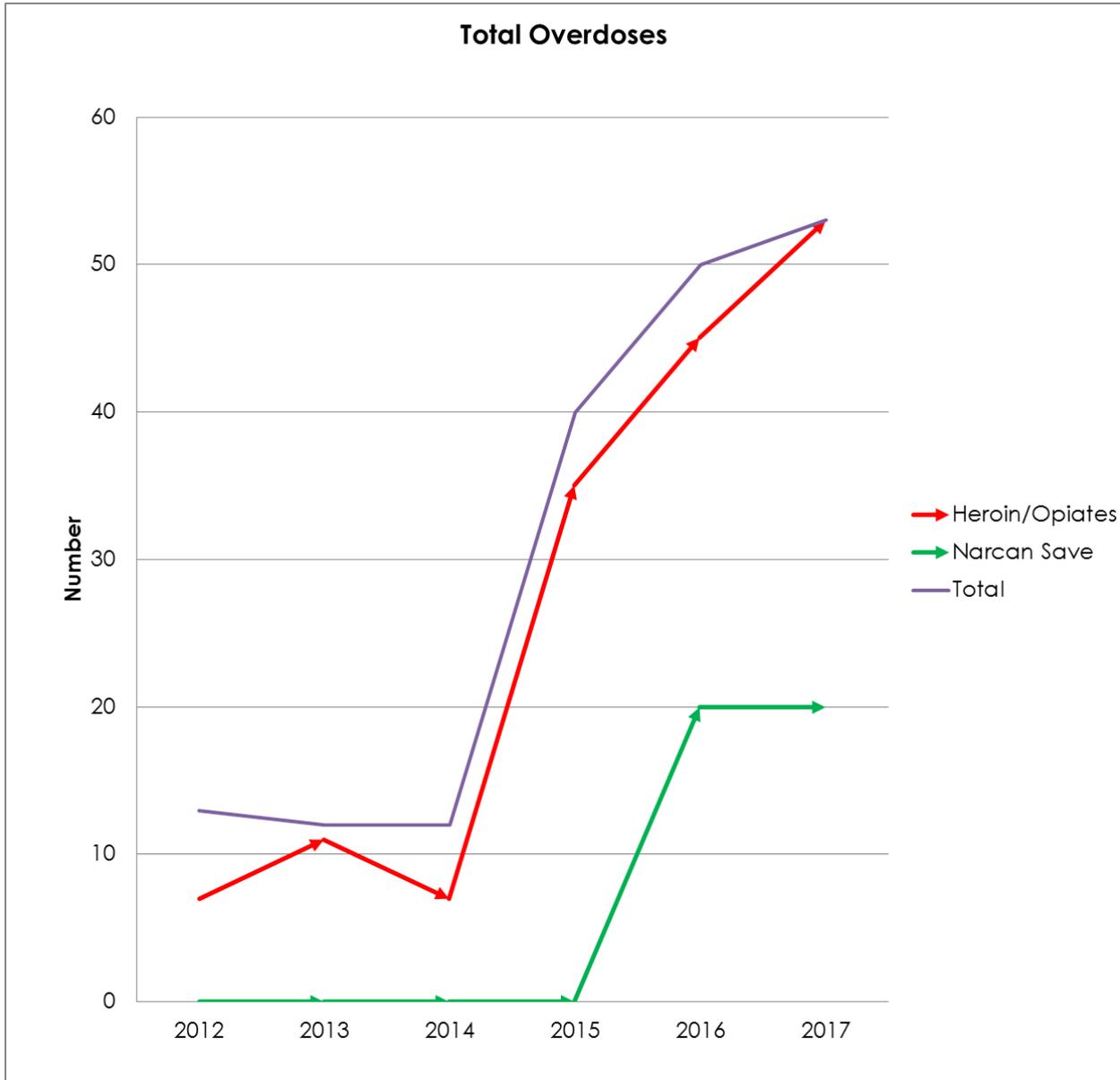
Hunterdon County Prosecutor Anthony P. Kearns, III, released new statistics showing the continuing increase in overdoses from the heroin epidemic in Hunterdon County.

Through September of this year, Hunterdon County already has had 40 reported overdoses resulting in 15 deaths, compared to 45 reported overdoses resulting in 15 deaths, in all of 2016. Eleven deaths occurred between June and September, with one deadly week resulting in 3 lives lost to overdoses from heroin. These grim statistics show the potential for over 53 overdoses and 20 deaths by the end of 2017.

According to Prosecutor Kearns, "These statistics are alarming and heart wrenching when you realize these numbers represent lives lost and families shattered. The impact of the heroin epidemic is not only tragic to families who've lost loved ones but to the community as a whole. The heroin epidemic impacts our healthcare and government services and causes an increase in crime as addicts resort to crime to feed their addictions. This epidemic is everyone's problem and it cannot be ignored. Preventing addiction, preventing death, and preserving the quality of life in Hunterdon County are of the utmost importance."

Prosecutor Kearns added, "Through September of this year, police deployed Naloxone 14 times and 14 people were saved. Without police administering Naloxone, we would have suffered almost 30 deaths in the county."

Naloxone, is an aerosol that is administered just like a nasal spray. It blocks the effects of an opioid for a period of time. The effects of an opiate can last up to four hours so overdose victims, even if revived by Naloxone, still require medical attention. Hunterdon County Police Officers were trained and issued Naloxone kits in 2014.



The Prosecutor also pointed out additional programs meant to help this epidemic.

The Overdose Protection Act was enacted by the Legislature and signed into law by Governor Chris Christie in 2013 with the purpose of encouraging witnesses and victims of drug overdoses to seek medical assistance and save lives. In instances where evidence is obtained as a result of seeking medical assistance, those involved are protected from arrest, charge, prosecution, conviction, and revocation of parole or probation for possession or use of illegal drugs. The Overdose Prevention Act enables people to make the right decision in dialing 9-1-1.

The Prosecutor's START program (Steps To Action Recovery and Treatment) was launched in 2014 and is designed to provide direct referral information, contained in a prepared packet, to individuals who are believed to be suffering in the grips of addiction or other crisis. The START Packet is given to individuals or to their families when they are released from jail, police custody, or the local

hospital emergency room. START packets are also available at libraries and other government buildings in Hunterdon County.

Anyone with information for law enforcement can submit **anonymous** tips by calling **Crime Stoppers** at **1-800-321-0010** or by going to [www.crimestoppershunterdon.com](http://www.crimestoppershunterdon.com), or text messaging “**HCTIPS**” plus your tip message to **274637 (CRIMES)**. Tipsters can also download the free mobile app “**Tipssubmit**” and select **Hunterdon County** to submit anonymous tips via text messaging. All tips are anonymous and kept confidential.

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