

BLACKSBURG POLICE DEPARTMENT
CITIZEN ADVISORY BOARD

RESOLUTION REGARDING COMMUNITY HEALTH
October 20, 2023

The Blacksburg Police Department Citizen Advisory Board is posting this resolution to inform the residents of the Town of Blacksburg that **deadly drugs are present in our community**. Our citizens, especially our Virginia Tech students and young people, need to be aware of this reality. Parents, educators and faith leaders are encouraged to educate themselves about drug availability in the community so that they can alert children, young people, and others to the dangers to which they can be exposed, even inadvertently.

The most life-threatening drugs in our community at this time are opiates, including fentanyl. There is a life-saving antidote to these drugs, naxalone (Narcan) which is available without a prescription at any pharmacy and is also available free for those who are trained in its administration. We advocate that Narcan should be widely available in the community and as many citizens as possible should be trained in its simple administration with a nasal spray.

Our community has experienced overdoses and fatalities in recent months. While these dire events have occurred at a lower rate than in other communities in the New River Valley, clearly we are not exempt from trends that are threatening citizens in our nation, in our state, in our region and, yes, in the Town of Blacksburg. People of all ages, races, incomes and education levels have fallen victim to this scourge.

The Citizen Advisory Board is informed of local and regional law enforcement issues by meeting monthly with Blacksburg Police Chief Todd Brewster and also by meeting frequently with other community leaders such as representatives of NRV Community Services and the NRV Regional Commission. Individual board members have conferred with the NRV Public Health Department and have attended local conferences.

Through these sources, the Board has learned that these dangerous, addictive, and **life-threatening** illegal drugs are being sold and consumed in our region and in our community. The most lethal of these drugs is **fentanyl**, which can kill in very small quantities. Methamphetamine and other opiates, widely available, are also responsible for accidental and sometimes fatal overdoses. **All of these drugs have been intercepted by our police department in the Town of Blacksburg.** Most alarmingly, counterfeit pills consisting of dangerous substances masquerading as legitimate prescription drugs have been seized by our Blacksburg police officers. It is also known that substances such as cocaine, marijuana and methamphetamine have been adulterated with fentanyl, unbeknownst to the users of these street drugs.

These substances are sometimes being produced locally and sometimes arriving with dealers driving to Blacksburg. Drugs are also ordered by individuals over the internet. With 30,000 college students residing in Blacksburg, criminals consider our community a marketing target. Investigations, arrests and prosecutions of those that provide these substances in the Town of Blacksburg are ongoing. The Blacksburg Police Department partners with law enforcement agencies in the region, the state and with federal authorities in this effort.

All law enforcement officers in the Town of Blacksburg, the Town of Christiansburg, Montgomery County and Virginia Tech have been trained on the use of Narcan which can reverse the fatal effects of opiates, including fentanyl. They carry Narcan while on duty. Training and providing of Narcan has also been made available to town employees, the members of the Citizen Advisory Board, educators and others. A recent infusion of opiate lawsuit settlement funds, as well as federal grants, has made it possible for all of our NRV governments to participate in a regional task force, the New River Valley Recovery Ecosystem Program. The Citizen Advisory Board urges Blacksburg government and other leaders, as well as the Blacksburg Police Department, to participate fully in this effort which is being directed by the NRV Regional Commission.

Under the leadership of Chief Todd Brewster and his predecessors, the Blacksburg Police Department is in the forefront of progressive police practices. Our police department has earned the highest level of accreditation from the national Commission on Accreditation for Law Enforcement (CALEA.) The Citizen Advisory Board urges the Blacksburg Police Department to be a source of information, prevention, advocacy and innovation in the effort to reduce the threat of lethal drugs in our town. The leadership of the Blacksburg Police Department and the government of the Town of Blacksburg is essential to the regional effort to protect our citizens.

Resolution of the Citizen Advisory Board October 20, 2023

Harriet Dorsey, Chair

References for further information:

Website for the Citizen Advisory Board is

<https://www.blacksburg.gov/departments/departments-l-z/police/community-relations/police-advisory-board>. Alternatively, go to the Blacksburg Police Department website and look for Police Advisory Board.

New River Valley Regional Commission. Holly Lesco, Director, Community Health hlesko@nrvc.org for information on the NRV Recovery Ecosystem Program

NRV Community Services for information on addiction, treatment, counseling, and NARCAN training. Mike Wade, Coordinator, Community Wellness and Outreach, mwade@nrvcs.org.

The Virginia Tech Community can contact Hokie Wellness for education and training. <https://hokiewellness.vt.edu>