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OVERDOSES UP 138 PERCENT IN MONTCO; 33 OF 49 POLICE DEPARTMENTS CARRYING OVERDOSE REVERSAL DRUG NALOXONE

NORRISTOWN, Pa. (Sept. 22, 2016) – Montgomery County, like the rest of the nation, is experiencing the worst drug overdose epidemic in history. Montgomery County Detective Bureau statistics show there were 260 overdoses in seven months this year (through July 24, 2016), with 85 deaths. In 2015, there were 187 recorded overdoses, with 71 deaths in 12 months—a 138 percent increase. While these overdoses were caused by all drug types, the vast majority were from heroin and opioids.

“Our county’s overdose numbers are being released during National Prescription Opioid and Heroin Epidemic Awareness Week as evidence that there is no community that is immune to this tragedy. It’s killing far too many people,” said District Attorney Kevin Steele. “We are attacking the crisis on all fronts: through arrests and law enforcement efforts, educational efforts, our Prescription Drug Disposal Program and by equipping police with the life-saving drug naloxone.”

Nearly 70 percent (33 of 49) of the county’s police departments are carrying the overdose-reversal drug naloxone (brand name Narcan). Naloxone is provided to police departments at no charge by the Montgomery County District Attorney’s Office, paid for with drug forfeiture funds. While 33 of 49 police departments is a good ratio—one of the best in the state—it’s not 100 percent.

“It is our goal to equip all 49 police departments with this life-saving drug to help protect the lives of our citizens,” said Steele. Steele also noted the overdose threat is also real for police officers themselves. “Given the emergence of fentanyl, an officer or his K-9 partner could accidentally inhale fentanyl while securing drug evidence and go into respiratory distress, requiring immediate treatment with naloxone.”

According to the Pennsylvania Department of Drug and Alcohol Programs, more than 320 municipal police departments in Pennsylvania were equipped with naloxone as of May 2016, with Montgomery County ranking third in the state in naloxone coverage. The Montgomery County police departments equipped with naloxone are: Abington, Conshohocken, Douglass, Hatboro, Hatfield, Jenkintown, Lansdale, Limerick, Lower Gwynedd, Lower Merion, Lower Pottsgrove, Lower Providence, Lower Salford, Marlborough, Montgomery, Narberth, New Hanover, Norristown, North Wales, Pottstown, Royersford, Springfield, Towamencin, Upper Gwynedd, Upper Merion, Upper Perkiomen, Upper Pottsgrove, Upper Providence, West Conshohocken, West Norriton, West Pottsgrove, Whitemarsh and Whitpain. In addition to the municipal police departments, Montgomery County Detectives, Montgomery County Sheriffs, local Pennsylvania State Police, Adult Probation Officers and ambulance services are also carrying naloxone.

Immediately administering naloxone can reverse an accidental overdose of heroin, opioids and the more powerful fentanyl. It can be administered by nasal spray or by automatic injector.

Approved for release:

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