



The Commonwealth of Massachusetts

NORFOLK DISTRICT ATTORNEY'S OFFICE

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Press Release

Safe Homes Coalition Launches Program in Norfolk County



SAFE HOMES
COALITION

The Greater Boston Association of REALTORS®, Millennium Health, Norfolk County Police Chiefs, Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey, Weymouth Mayor Sue Kay, and Learn to Cope partner to reduce prescription medication deaths.

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WEYMOUTH – Today, a number of Norfolk County police chiefs and law enforcement officials joined Norfolk District Attorney Michael W. Morrissey, Weymouth Mayor Sue Kay, and State Representatives Mark Cusack and James Murphy to welcome a new partner in the fight against prescription drug abuse and addiction: area realtors.

The Safe Homes Coalition joined area law enforcement and drug prevention leaders to announce a new program in Greater Boston designed to reduce the abuse of prescription medication and overdose deaths. The Safe Homes Coalition leads a unique partnership comprised of the Greater Boston Association of REALTORS® (a division of the Greater Boston Real Estate Board), Learn to Cope, Millennium Health and local government and law enforcement leaders. The Coalition also includes organizations representing: the medical, dental and health care communities; recovery advocates; youth athletics; and other community partnerships.

“We need to prevent prescription medications from getting into the hands of people who shouldn’t have them, especially those most vulnerable – our children. The Safe Homes Coalition educates and empowers people to understand how to safely secure and dispose of unused or unwanted medications,” said Gregory A. Stein, Safe Homes Coalition Executive Director. “The Safe Homes Coalition brings together organizations throughout the Commonwealth to help stem this epidemic.”

“We have seen prescription drugs stolen during real estate open houses and viewings,” District Attorney Morrissey said. “The Safe Homes Coalition will educate sellers on how to secure the drugs in their homes during showings, but also provide information on the larger issues of perpetual safe storage and disposal.”

Morrissey recalled that, a generation ago, the real estate transaction process became a critical point in Massachusetts fire safety, when the installation of fire detectors in homes during sales made them ubiquitous, and saved many, many lives. “Real estate professionals are stepping up again.”

“Studies tell us that nearly half of young people who use heroin were addicted to prescription drugs first,” said Mayor Kay. “Yet we frequently leave unused, unsecured prescription drugs in common areas in our homes. Education is critical, and it requires the kind of collective community action and partnership that the Safe Homes Coalition embodies.”

“Public safety officials have partnered with local government, advocates, and the public health community to get at this crisis, but we’re still seeing alarming rates of overdoses,” said Rep. Cusack. “Prescription drug abuse knows no boundaries. We see it in suburbs and cities, across all socioeconomic classes, gender, cultures, and races. It’s time for more creative solutions like the Safe Homes Coalition.”

“I’m proud to support the Safe Homes Coalition and the work of our public safety and health officials,” said Rep. Murphy. “This has been a massive issue on the South Shore in particular, and we need to work together as partners across all industries to find creative solutions.”

The Norfolk District Attorney’s Office has responded to 94 fatal opiate overdoses in all of 2014, and has already responded to more than 110 in 2015. That number underrepresents the scope of the problem, DA Morrissey believes, because his office would not always be called if an overdose victim is transported to a hospital and then dies. “Research tells us that as many as 70% of opiate users say they got their first dose out of the medicine cabinet of family or a friend,” Morrissey said. “Close that supply stream and you will save lives – without doubt.”

To learn more about the Greater Boston Keep Kids Safe program, to partner with us, to request a a speaker for an educational program in your community, to obtain Keep Kids Safe bags, or to donate, visit <http://makeitasafefhome.org/boston>.