



PAULDING COUNTY SHERIFF'S OFFICE

SHERIFF GARY GULLEDGE
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Citizens of Paulding County:

I am writing this letter to you in an appeal to help get the word out about a serious problem that is occurring on a far to frequent basis in not only Paulding County but the entire country. Heroin and prescription drug related overdose deaths have steadily been on the rise. In 2014 we had 15 overdose deaths as a result of prescription pills and 10 overdose deaths as a result of heroin in Paulding County. There are seven overdose cases that are still pending toxicology results at the Georgia Bureau of Investigation Crime Lab. In 2015, we have already had at least one near overdose death as a result of heroin. Luckily, EMS professionals and doctors were able to save that victim.

I have seen teenagers and adults from all different backgrounds fall victim to this lethal drug. As your Sheriff, I feel as if it is my duty to help educate the citizens on what the dangers of heroin really are.

Heroin is derived from the morphine alkaloid found in opium and is roughly two to three times more potent than morphine. Ultimately, heroin comes from morphine which comes from the poppy plant. According to recent studies, Afghanistan is the leading producer of raw opium (poppy plant), which is used to produce the synthesized heroin. In recent years, Mexico has increased its production and is now the second largest producer of opium in the world.

One of the main reasons that heroin use and abuse is on the rise is because stricter regulations have been placed on the distribution of opioid based prescription narcotics (Oxycodone, Hydrocodone, Roxycodone, etc.). Since the prescription opioids are more difficult to get, many abusers have turned to heroin which is easier to obtain and it is cheaper. The reason so many people are overdosing on heroin is because unlike prescription pills, which are manufactured in a lab by a chemist, heroin is manufactured by someone with no formal chemical engineering education. Another problem with heroin is that it can be "cut" and laced with different products which can make it even more harmful.

Warning signs that a person may be using heroin are relatively easy to spot. Shortness of breath, constricted pupils, dry mouth, periods of hyper alertness and then suddenly nodding off are only a few. Needle track marks on the body, infections or abscesses around injection sites, unclean or decreased hygiene, and a lack of concern for personal appearance are among some of the others. Although there are too many warning signs to list, if your loved one is not acting like they normally do and you suspect that something is wrong, talk to them and ask the tough questions that no one wants to ask. Asking those questions might just save their life.

My message is simple: talk to your loved ones and look at them closely. If you suspect they are using some type of illegal narcotic, especially heroin, do something to help them. We have worked closely with the *Family Alliance of Paulding* for many years and one of our goals is to try and assist those with addictions and get them help. If you need help or have a loved one that is struggling with addiction call them at (678) 202-5777. If you know someone who is selling illegal drugs please call the Haralson-Paulding Drug Task Force at (770) 646-9175.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sheriff Gary Gullede". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Gary Gullede
Paulding County Sheriff