

New Booklet Helps Mourning Families Overcome Grief

NOPE Task Force created the booklet to assist grieving families who have lost loved ones to drugs. Police officers will distribute the booklet, which offers guidance on coping with death and understanding drug addiction.

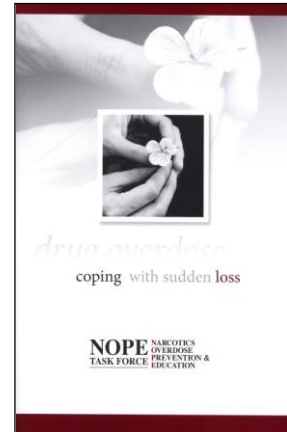
By Leon Fooksman

Moments ago, police officers left your home after delivering unthinkable news: your son died of a drug overdose.

Now what?

You are in shock. You don't know to whom you should turn. You wonder if you'll make it through the day.

It's a situation dozens of American families experience every day as a drug abuse epidemic associated with dangerous prescription pills races from Maine to California.



There is help on the way, courtesy of NOPE Task Force.

NOPE (Narcotics Overdose Prevention & Education) has created a new booklet to assist survivors overcome their grief and restore their lives. Police officers will be distributing the booklet to families mourning drug-related death.

The booklet offers guidance on coping with sudden loss and understanding addiction. It explains how police investigate overdose deaths. There's also data on drug overdoses and current trends in drug abuse. In addition, the booklet offers contact information for support groups and other resources from NOPE.

"We wanted to create a comprehensive booklet that addresses all the issues pertaining to survivors so they can go on with their lives without feeling that they are at fault," said Karen Perry, NOPE's executive director who co-wrote the booklet.

The booklet will be delivered first to families in Palm Beach County, Fla., where NOPE is based and where the number of overdose deaths jumped from 248 in 2005 to 372 in 2009. NOPE's partner, the Palm Beach County

Sheriff's Office, has agreed to distribute the booklets when deputies and detectives make initial contact with families.

Another NOPE partner, Pinellas County Sheriff's Office near Tampa, Fla., is also considering distributing the booklet to survivors in its area.

"When police notify families of a death cause by an overdose, families are left in shock," said Gary Martin, a detective at the Palm Beach County Sheriff's Office and associate dean for student life at Lynn University in Boca Raton, Fla.

"We give them a lot of information, but they don't remember. This booklet focuses on the issues families are dealing with. Most of all, it helps them realize that they are not the only ones going through this," added Martin, who co-wrote the booklet and is a NOPE board member.

Martin said the booklet's content is based on police knowledge of what information survivors need most following the initial shock of their loss. Martin has decades of police experience in assisting survivors, and he focused a part of the booklet on explaining the process of investigating overdoses so survivors can find closure.

"We get questions all the time like, 'Why hasn't anyone been arrested for the death?' or 'Why isn't the drug dealer charged in the death?'" Martin said. "These are all issues that take time to investigate; they are part of a process. We need families to understand that."

The booklet, for now, is being distributed among NOPE's law enforcement partners in Florida and California. NOPE eventually hopes to work with other police agencies to distribute the booklet to survivors.



If you value NOPE Task Force's commitment to preventing drug overdoses, please consider a financial contribution to support the organization. Donate at www.nopetaskforce.org/donations.asp

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