



# BCPO News

**Scott A. Coffina, Prosecutor**

**Philip S. Aronow**  
*First Assistant Prosecutor*

**Darren N. Anderson**  
*Chief of Detectives*



Joel Bewley  
BCPO Public Information Officer  
Desk: 609-265-5777 Cell: 609-820-4407  
[jbewley@co.burlington.nj.us](mailto:jbewley@co.burlington.nj.us)

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## **BCPO Hosts “Operation Safe Overnight” to Save Lives at Hotels/Motels**

Burlington County Prosecutor Scott Coffina hosted employees today from Burlington County hotels and motels at a drug education and training program as part of “Operation Safe Overnight,” an initiative aimed at saving lives and increasing enforcement activity at properties that have experienced overdoses and drug-related criminal activity.

“Nationwide, motels and hotels have been susceptible to a higher risk of overdoses as the ongoing drug use epidemic rages on,” Prosecutor Coffina said. “This groundbreaking initiative represents another approach we are incorporating into our efforts to save as many lives as possible from this deadly scourge. We hope to enhance our relationship with these properties to enable us to work together and create an environment to keep their guests and employees safe.”

The initiative officially was launched this morning in Mount Laurel with an information and training session for employees from the County’s approximately 75 hotels and motels who attended the event.

Police and emergency officials have deployed Narcan at hotels on multiple occasions since it first began being used outside of emergency rooms in 2014. There have been at least 15 fatal overdoses at motels and hotels in Burlington County in 2018.

Since the beginning of 2018, there have been 135 suspected fatal overdoses in Burlington County, which is on pace to surpass the 143 fatal overdoses that occurred last year. Narcan has been deployed 776 times during 2018, according to NJ Cares.

During today’s program, an overview of the epidemic was presented by officials from the Prosecutor’s Office and the Bordentown Township, Maple Shade and Mount Laurel police departments, which have many hotel and motel properties in their jurisdictions.

Hotel staff members were instructed on how to identify individuals who may be at risk for a potential overdose, and also how to recognize and keep themselves safe from exposure to Controlled Dangerous Substances while cleaning or maintaining guest rooms and common areas.

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A demonstration also was given on how to use Narcan to revive someone who has overdosed. The Prosecutor's Office gave attendees Narcan kits, which were supplied by Virtua at no cost to the hotels.

"We are very grateful for Virtua's enthusiastic support of our efforts to save lives in Burlington County, not only through Safe Overnight, but also through their support in providing naloxone to our municipal police departments," Prosecutor Coffina said. "Our hope in distributing Narcan today is to encourage hotels, here and across the country, to have this lifesaving drug available, similar to how most public accommodations now have defibrillators on hand in case of heart attacks."

Also as part of Operation Safe Overnight, the Prosecutor's Office Gang, Gun and Narcotics Task Force has prioritized hotel and motel properties as a focus of its investigative and enforcement activities in 2018.

"Operation Safe Overnight has both a lifesaving component and a less visible, but no less energetic, enforcement component. We have been working more closely with our local law enforcement partners to combat drug trafficking and other criminal activity at county hotels and motels," Prosecutor Coffina said. "These efforts will continue through intelligence sharing and coordinated investigations and operations at properties where we suspect people may be dealing drugs."

In addition to Operation Safe Overnight, the Prosecutor's Office has established a program whereby people struggling with addiction can walk into the police station in Evesham and Pemberton Township, be assessed by a professional for their treatment needs, and be immediately referred to a treatment program.

The program, called "Straight ... to Treatment," operates in Evesham on Mondays from noon to 7 p.m., and Pemberton Township on Tuesdays from noon to 6 p.m.

Along with expanding access to treatment, Prosecutor Coffina has also pledged to aggressively prosecute drug dealers whose customers fatally overdose from the product they were sold.

**END**