

Ocean County Health Department  
PO Box 2191  
Toms River, NJ 08754-2191  
**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

Contact: Leslie Terjesen  
Public Information Officer  
732-341-9700, ext. 7224  
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**DON'T WAIT UNTIL IT IS TOO LATE  
PARENTS...TALK TO YOUR KIDS ABOUT THE DANGERS OF DRUGS**

The Ocean County Opiate Task Force is just one of the few new task forces within Ocean County trying to deal with the senseless deaths from heroin. Daniel Regenye, Ocean County Health Department (OCHD) Public Health Coordinator, said, "Our Health Educators are reporting when they are working with adolescents, they are talking about how teens are starting with prescription drugs and once addicted, are finding that heroin is a cheap "high." Much of our focus in the past few years has been the proper disposal of prescription medications or when taking prescribed drugs, make sure they are stored in a safe place. We are aware that prescription drugs are a "gateway" to using heroin. One of our concerns is some of the new extraordinarily dangerous heroin-type substances. Parents should be aware of noticeable changes in their child's behavior. Parents should also understand that many dangerous drugs are easily accessible in the community.

The task force is comprised of members of the Ocean County Health Department, the Ocean County Prosecutor's Office, the Ocean County Department of Human Services and many Ocean County drug treatment and behavioral health facilities. Next week, a forum for parents is being hosted at the Pine Belt Arena at Toms River High School North, called, "*Your Kids Count. Can We Talk?*" In addition to Ocean County Prosecutor Joseph D. Coronato, there will be several other prominent speakers discussing how parents can protect their children from the substance abuse epidemic in Ocean County. The forum will be held on Thursday, October 24<sup>th</sup> at 6:30PM. Attendees are advised to register by Friday, October 18<sup>th</sup>. Please visit [www.instituteforprevention.com/dart](http://www.instituteforprevention.com/dart) to register. If you have further questions, please call 732.886.4757.

The Ocean County Health Department will continue to update their website with pertinent information for parents regarding drugs. Regenye continued, "We will continue to work with our Prosecutor's Office and other partners to battle this epidemic. We would like to turn the tide in this constant reporting of heroin deaths and want to include parents in the battle with us."

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