



## 1.6 Incident Investigations

### 1.6.28 Guidelines for Police Attending Illicit Drug Overdoses

(Effective: 2006.06.29)

#### **POLICY**

Recent research has shown that though many drug overdose cases are witnessed, there is often reluctance in calling for emergency medical assistance for fear that police will also attend, resulting in prosecution. A drug overdose is by its very nature a medical emergency requiring rapid medical intervention to preserve life.

There is little value in police attendance at a routine, non-fatal overdose. It would be a rare circumstance for criminal charges to arise from attendance at a routine overdose call. In order to encourage a witness to a drug overdose to access emergency medical aid without delay, it is necessary to establish policy with respect to police attendance at overdose calls. Policy should tend to restrict police attendance to drug overdose calls only in the event there is a specific need for public safety.

The primary reason for police attendance at a non-fatal drug overdose call is to assist with life saving measures, and to assist with public safety.

#### **PROCEDURE**

##### **NON FATAL ILLICIT DRUG OVERDOSE RESPONSE POLICY**

1. When a member is advised of a drug overdose while in the performance of their duties, they shall immediately notify EHS through ECOMM and attend to the location of the victim until EHS arrives.
2. When EHS receives a call of "a possible drug overdose" EHS dispatch will notify Police Dispatch, through ECOMM, who shall, by way of a general broadcast, advise District Units that "EHS is responding to a possible drug overdose, the location and assistance not requested."
3. Police will not normally attend EHS calls for a routine drug overdose unless EHS has advised ECOMM that "Assistance is Requested," for any or all of the reasons below:
  - a. Death of a person from an overdose is likely; or
  - b. EHS personnel request police attendance to assist with public safety; or
  - c. EHS personnel request police attendance because there is something suspicious about the incident; and
  - d. In each instance when police assistance is requested, the reason for the request will be broadcast to police units by the district dispatcher.

##### **FATAL DRUG OVERDOSE CALLS**

4. In the case of a drug overdose death, the member will fully investigate the incident as a sudden or suspicious death (refer to: Section 1.6.38- Sudden Deaths; Section 1.6.12 (ii)-Handling Procedure and Section 1.7.6- Major Crime Scene Responsibilities).
5. The assigned unit shall notify their Supervisor of the fatal overdose, and record the details of the incident in the District Overnight Book for discussion at the Daily Operations Management Meeting. The assigned patrol unit will ensure that a copy of the General Occurrence Report is routed to the Inspector i/c of the Drug Squad for follow up consideration.