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We're All in This Together



The opioid crisis, bias-free law enforcement, cyber security, domestic terrorism. Heavy topics, right? It's just a few of those discussed at the National Homeland Security Consortium (NHSC) meeting in January in Little Rock, Arkansas. The NHSC is made up of 22 national associations that voluntarily come together to address homeland security challenges, share information, serve as a sounding board for federal partners, and build relationships among public health, safety and security officials.

One of the group's priorities is to share state and local model practices, amongst all the disciplines represented on the NHSC. NHSC Tri-Chair Jared Maples, New Jersey Homeland Security Advisor, invited his State Police colleague to discuss their state's approach to the opioid crisis.

The New Jersey State Police Opioid Enforcement Task Force (OETF) was created to address the supply side of the opioid epidemic in New Jersey by attacking the supply of illicit opioids, using advanced investigative methods, and attacking at the point where heroin and fentanyl are packaged into individual doses for street level distribution.

The OETF uses data, particularly for overdoses and deaths, to track where bad batches have hit the streets and the State Police then focus on the mills which are connected to the batches. Often, bags of heroin have individual stamps (nicknamed "Death Stamps"), which the police also then use to develop informants and track where suppliers are selling. This is part of the Drug Monitoring Initiative (DMI), which is run through the fusion center.

New Jersey's strategy to combat the opioid crisis is through prevention, treatment, and enforcement (PTE). The Death Stamp Project is part of the enforcement process, but

prevention and treatment strategies are also being utilized to limit the spread and continuation of the epidemic. Now, in high school, students must watch videos on opioids for athletic activity eligibility, and when someone overdoses, task force that works on opioids intervene and provide information on recovery access.

On a much lighter note, during the meeting the NHSC elected two new tri-chairs for the group and they are the International City/County Managers Association (ICMA) and the Governor’s Homeland Security Advisors Council (GHSAC). Congratulations! NEMA serves as the third permanent tri-chair of the NHSC. The partnership initiative is funded through the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA).

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