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East Windsor Parents Express Concerns About Heroin Use

By [Jamie Ratliff](#) | Wednesday, Mar 12, 2014 | Updated 6:54 AM EDT

A public health crisis is what some say is taking place in East Windsor after a 14-year-old student died of a heroin overdose.

"It's a growing epidemic among kids younger and younger, kids and more and more serious drugs," said Dr. Tim Kearney, Chief Behavioral Health Officer for the Community Health Center.

That frightening fact hit East Windsor hard. In response, the school district and Community Health Center organized a meeting to combat the problem.

"It happens everywhere, which is unfortunate, and it just happened to be in our small community,"

Donna Gendreau, a parent, said.

Last month, a 14-year-old girl died of a heroin overdose and the revelation that four other students had been caught taking Xanax left many wondering how much worse it would get.

"It was someone [my daughter] had known, so it was tough. It was tough to hear. There was sadness in our family," said Gendreau.

Gendreau's daughter, Rachel, attends East Windsor Middle School and said there is a drug problem, but that the school's trying to get rid of it.

"How the community came together was really nice to see, just everybody talking about it and not just saying, 'OK, let's not talk about it,'" Rachel said.

According to the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner, heroin fatalities have jumped in the state from 174 in 2012 to 257 in 2013, and East Windsor Police said they've noticed an increase in their own town.

Communication between a parent and child is key, according to experts, and students need to know professionals are there to help.

"I'd much rather have [a student] in my office later on saying, 'My friends are really mad at me because I broke their confidence,' than have [a student] sitting here crying, saying, 'I didn't tell anybody and now my friend is dead.' And I think the children just have to break that code of silence and reach out for help," Kearney said.

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