

# Synthetic drugs a problem

LACE to add them to problem statements

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The Local Anti-Drug Coalition Efforts (LACE) decided to update the group's problem statements on the Comprehensive Community Plan (CCP) to include synthet-

ic drugs at its first meeting of the year on Monday afternoon.

"What happens is, the plan works for three years and we have to do updates for those three years," said Andrew Norman, LACE coordinator. "And at the end of those three years we have to change it."

This year, LACE needs to write a new plan, as well as give an update, he said.

LACE's current CCP has three problem statements which address drug

and alcohol abuse, high tobacco use and abuse of prescription and over-the-counter drugs.

A fourth statement concerning the abuse of synthetic drugs will be added when the CCP is updated.

"The problem with synthetic drugs, I think, is that it's relatively new and there isn't a lot of data on it, yet," Norman said. "That's what it seems like and other coordinators are running into it, as well."

Marty Burns of New Opinions said he has not seen

many people come in with synthetic drug problems.

"I've had maybe three or four that were smoking spice before they pretty much made that illegal," he said. "I have not had anybody with basals. I will tell you Wabash has had a big problem with basals and has had a kid die over there from the use of it."

The problem, he said, is that when one synthetic drug is outlawed, another synthetic drug comes out that is different and not

covered by the law.

Heather Malone, a probation officer for the county, said she had heard from a juvenile probation officer that the kids use it "because they can."

"It's not a probation violation," she said. "They changed the K2, so that was illegal but now it's something else, K3, and that's not illegal so they can get it."

The sheriff's department can't make a criminal arrest dealing with

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synthetic drugs, said Huntington County Chief Deputy Chris Newton.

"We have to send it off to the State Police Post for testing," he said. "And they're so backlogged they're going to take their priority cases over synthetics."

It could take at least four

months to get test results back, he said.

"It makes enforcement for us, I mean, what's the point when you get something back ten months to a year later?" Newton asked.

The sheriff's department is seeing a problem with synthetics more in the middle schools than in the

high school, he said.

"So those kids who don't really want to try marijuana, because they're scared to try it, they get these synthetics; it's easier to get," Newton said.

The new CCP will need to be filed by March 24, and will include the addition of synthetic drugs as a problem statement.