

# Dealing with Suspected Drug Houses

I recently received a request from one of our organized neighborhood associations, North Flats, for some tips on dealing with a suspected drug house in the neighborhood. Suspected drug houses and their associated crime frustrate residents striving to make their neighborhoods a vibrant place to live and work. If you suspect drug activity at a house in your neighborhood, police need your assistance to take care of the problem. Here are some signs to watch for:

- Excessive foot and vehicle traffic from visitors at all times of the day. Visitors stay for very short periods. Remember, there are often explanations for excessive traffic at a residence such as large families with active teenage children. Look for additional signs of drug activity to help confirm your suspicions.
- Resident may exit residence to meet pedestrians or drivers nearby, again for short periods.
- Residents may attempt to intimidate neighbors from cooperating with the police.
- Obvious exchanges of money and drugs.
- A noticeable increase in crime and disorder in the surrounding neighborhood such as thefts, burglary, graffiti, etc.
- A noticeable decline in the appearance of the house. The yard may have excessive garbage piled up against the house or porch.
- The residents may take extreme security measures compared with the rest of the neighborhood such as barricaded doors, security cameras or even utilize “lookouts” during certain times of the day.

If you suspect there is a drug house in your neighborhood, contact your neighborhood officer and report your concerns. Depending on the identity of the residents and the extent of the issues, your neighborhood officer will develop a strategy to rectify problem. This plan may include a request for neighborhood residents to document suspicious activity and perhaps keep a detailed log of observations. This log should detail specific times that visitors are arriving and how long they stay. Additional information should include specifics such as descriptions and plates of vehicles operated by the residents and the most frequent visitors. If you see suspected criminal activity occurring that you feel warrants an immediate police response, call the police and report your concerns.

Equally important to the role of the police in resolving this and similar problems is the role of the residents living nearby. Simple proactive efforts by citizens can prevent a drug house from developing in the first place. The overall appearance of the entire neighborhood is instrumental to preventing crime. A well-lit neighborhood free of litter and abandoned cars along with well-kept homes and yards conveys a clear message that the residents care about the neighborhood and that crime and disorder are not tolerated. Develop relationships with neighbors. Knowing your neighbors enables you to recognize who belongs at the residence and who does not. Collaborate with them and agree to watch each other's property to discourage opportunities for people to commit crime.

If the problem residence is a rental property, make a point of contacting the landlord to politely express your concerns. If you are a landlord, aggressively screen your prospective tenants and establish a lease that clearly addresses criminal and nuisance activity. Share problem tenant information with fellow landlords to avoid simply displacing problem tenants to another neighborhood. A strong and active neighborhood is a great deterrent for drug activity.

The Sheboygan Police Department strives to collaborate with residents to reduce the level of crime and fear of crime and resolve neighborhood problems. Citizens working in partnership with their neighbors and police are the foundation of a strong, safe and vibrant neighborhood.

Captain Kurt Brasser/Sheboygan Police Department