



SANTA MONICA-MALIBU UNIFIED SCHOOL DISTRICT

October 21, 2022

Superintendent's Message: Dangers of Fentanyl - One Pill Can Kill

Dear Parents, Guardians, Staff, Students and Community Members,

I am writing to provide important information about the dangers of fentanyl. We are all hearing about the dangers in the news, but may not be quite sure about the level of concern in our communities or what each of us can do to help during this time of crisis. With fentanyl, one pill can kill. A few specs in powder form can kill.

We continue to receive information from local law enforcement about a very dangerous drug situation in Los Angeles County. The misuse and abuse of opioids, or any prescription medication, is already cause for concern, but there has been a rise in the prevalence of counterfeit Percocet and Oxycodone/oxycotin in LA County as well as new forms of fentanyl.

Youth incidents of fentanyl poisoning and deaths on the rise

According to the California Department of Public Health:

- Brightly-colored fentanyl (referred to as rainbow fentanyl) has been identified as a new trend according to the United States (U.S.) Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) [1].
- Rainbow fentanyl can be found in many forms, including pills, powder, and blocks that can resemble sidewalk chalk or candy. Any pill (regardless of its color, shape, or size) that does not come from a health care provider or pharmacist can contain fentanyl and can be deadly.

[Fentanyl](#) is 80-100 times more potent than morphine and 40-50 times more potent than heroin and, as a result, is a major cause of poisoning for unsuspecting individuals.[2]

According to the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) California Overdose Surveillance Dashboard [3]:

- Emergency department visits related to non-fatal opioid overdoses in California's youth ages 10-19 years more than tripled from 2018 (379 total) to 2020 (1,222 total).
- Opioid-related overdose deaths in California's youth ages 10-19 years increased from 2018 (54 total) to 2020 (274 total), marking a 407 percent increase over two years, largely driven by fentanyl.
- Fentanyl-related overdose deaths in California's youth ages 10-19 years increased from 2018 (36 total) to 2020 (261 total), a 625 percent increase.

People purchasing pills online, shared by a friend or from a street seller are likely unaware that they contain fentanyl. Fentanyl drug facts: [English](#) / [Español](#)

Things you can do

1. Carry the overdose reversal medication **naloxone (Narcan)** and keep it at home. You or your teen may help save a life.

- a. Narcan has no adverse side effects and is available without a physician's prescription at most pharmacies and many health clinics, including Venice Family Clinic.
 - b. Each SMMUSD secondary school is equipped with Narcan in their nurse's office. We have ordered more to increase our inventory. (We have carried Narcan at our schools since 2018.)
 - c. Local law enforcement generally has Narcan on hand for emergency response, and some pharmacies and health centers have it available for free, no questions asked.
 - i. Get info on free Narcan, training and test strips: www.endoverdose.net
 - d. Similar to administering CPR, using a defibrillator, or assisting a choking victim, giving someone Narcan is protected under good samaritan laws.
 - e. You or your teen can be a hero and save a life.
2. If you find **any** pills (images of pharmaceutical Percocet and Oxycodone can be viewed here: [Percocet](#) and [Oxycodone](#), for reference), **do not touch them**. Call local law enforcement for removal.
 3. Speak with your child / teen about this information so they know the risks of buying or sharing prescription medication and that these pills are out there. Substance use prevention tips for parents: [English](#) / [Español](#)
 4. Call local law enforcement if you or your student have seen these pills. Speaking up may save a friend's life!
 5. Contact the 24/7 Mental Health & Substance Use Access & Assessment Hotline (888-818-1115) to get help for a friend or loved one struggling with substance abuse.

PTSA parent education program

A SMMUSD parent education program "**Fentanyl Explained**" is planned for Thursday, November 10 at 7 p.m. Sponsored by Samohi PTSA, John Adams School PTSA and Lincoln Middle School PTSA, this drug awareness event is open to parents, staff and community members. Join via Zoom or in person at the JAMS performing arts center studio, 2425 16th St. Santa Monica. [Flyer attached for more information](#), Zoom link and question link. Please note that the conversation will be geared for parents. It's suggested that students do not attend this presentation. The meeting will be recorded and available on the www.smmpta.org website following the event.

County of Los Angeles training program for students and parents

The Los Angeles County Department of Public Health is offering training sessions for parents, and a separate training for students that will discuss current trends, risk factors, effective communication tools and resources:

Parents: Nov. 14, 5 - 6 p.m. English / Nov. 15, 5-6 p.m. Spanish

Students: Nov. 16, 4:30 - 5:30 p.m.

[Learn more about this program](#)

We are working closely with our City partners to ensure that all community members have an awareness of this crisis and support efforts to curb the devastating effects of fentanyl poisoning.

We wish to keep our students and families as safe as possible and free from the dangers caused by these drugs.

Sincerely,

Dr. Ben Drati, Superintendent

References:

[1] Drug Enforcement Agency. *DEA Warns of Brightly-Colored Fentanyl Used to Target Young Americans.*

<https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2022/08/30/dea-warns-brightly-colored-fentanyl-used-target-young-americans> (Last Updated: August 2022)

[2] CDPH. *What is Fentanyl?*

<https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDCDC/DCDC/Pages/Fentanyl.aspx> (Last Updated: August 2022)

[3] CDPH. *California Overdose Surveillance Dashboard* <https://skylab.cdph.ca.gov/ODdash/> (Last Updated: July 2022)