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Sandy Damiano, Interim Director

Divisions
Behavioral Health Services
Primary Health
Public Health
Departmental Administration

County of Sacramento

DATE: October 19, 2022
TO: Sacramento County School Superintendents
FROM: Olivia Kasirye, MD, MS, Public Health Officer *Olivia Kasirye MD*
SUBJECT: Fentanyl Dangers | Naloxone: Opioid Overdose Reversal Medication

I am writing today to follow up on information I shared during the recent District meeting in October about the dangers of fentanyl. 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/oxycontin as well as new forms of fentanyl.

According to a recent California Department of Public Health (CDPH) alert about rainbow fentanyl: *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 overdose for unsuspecting individuals. [2]

According to the CDPH 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) to 2020 (1,222).
- Opioid-related overdose deaths in California's youth ages 10-19 years increased 407 percent from 2018 (54) to 2020 (274), an increase that was largely driven by fentanyl.
- Fentanyl-related overdose deaths in California's youth ages 10-19 years increased 625 percent from 2018 (36) to 2020 (261).

Recent Sacramento County data shows that drug overdose caused 1,425 deaths in the county from 2016 to 2020, and was the leading cause of death as well as the leading cause of years of potential life lost in that age group. Fentanyl was among the most common substance identified in these deaths (see attached factsheet). People purchasing these pills are likely unaware that they contain fentanyl.

Earlier this week, the Sacramento County District Attorney's Office issued a Public Safety Alert regarding rainbow fentanyl, noting that law enforcement made the first significant rainbow fentanyl pill seizure in the Sacramento region. [4]

Division of Public Health
Olivia Kasirye, MD, MS
Public Health Officer



7001-A East Parkway, Suite 600A
Sacramento, CA 95823
phone (916) 875-5881
fax (916) 854-9709
www.scph.com

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Sacramento County Public Health encourages schools to develop and implement a local school naloxone policy, which allows for trained staff members to administer naloxone (brand name: Narcan). Naloxone is an overdose reversal medication, which can be lifesaving if given promptly after an overdose while awaiting for an ambulance. Naloxone can be obtained from the State of California through these steps:

Step 1: Apply for a [CDPH Standing Order](#)

Step 2: Request free naloxone through the [DHCS Naloxone Distribution Project](#)

Step 3: Keep naloxone on campus and train staff on its usage (Naloxone is an easy to use nasal spray. Training can be conducted using a short YouTube video)

Resources:

[Naloxone FAQ](#) (CA DHCS)

[Narcan Training Video](#) (Narcan)

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/CCDPHP/sapb/Pages/Fentanyl.aspx> (Last Updated: August 2022)

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

[4] Sacramento County DA. Public Safety Alert: Rainbow Fentanyl in Sacramento! <https://www.sacda.org/2022/10/public-safety-alert-rainbow-fentanyl-in-sacramento/> (October 17, 2022)