

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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Spotlight: Fentanyl & Fake Pills

What You Need to Know



FENTANYL

Fentanyl is an extremely powerful synthetic opioid, much stronger than other opioids like oxycodone, and is estimated to be 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine. All forms of fentanyl can be dangerous and it's important to know the differences.

- In its prescription form, fentanyl is used medically to treat severe or long-term pain in patients who need continuous relief.
- Prescription fentanyl is not usually linked to most synthetic opioid harms or overdoses.

However, fentanyl is also illegally manufactured and sold, and is one of the most common drugs associated with overdose deaths in the United States. In Ventura County, from 2019 to 2020 alone, fentanyl contributed significantly to a 45% increase in opioid-related fatal overdoses.

- In most cases, illegal fentanyl is made in Mexico, often supplied with ingredients from China, and the exact formula and potency are often unknown until it's too late.
- Some drug dealers mix fentanyl with other drugs such as heroin or cocaine, so people might snort, swallow, smoke, or inject it without knowing.
- Fentanyl analogs, such as carfentanil, are chemically related to fentanyl, and are often more toxic.
- Illegal fentanyl and its counterpart, fake pills, are fueling the epidemic of drug overdoses in the United States.

FAKE PILLS

The illicit form of fentanyl is also sold in counterfeit or fake pills, which are disguised as other drugs, frequently as round, blue pills. The deception can be deadly if someone believes they are taking a harmless pill.

- One in four fake pills tested by DEA labs contained a potentially lethal dose of fentanyl.
- Fake pills are sold online and on apps that are popular with teens, who may believe they are buying something safe for anxiety or depression.
- Teens especially may believe that all medicine is safe and be unaware that the pill that appears safe is actually deadly.

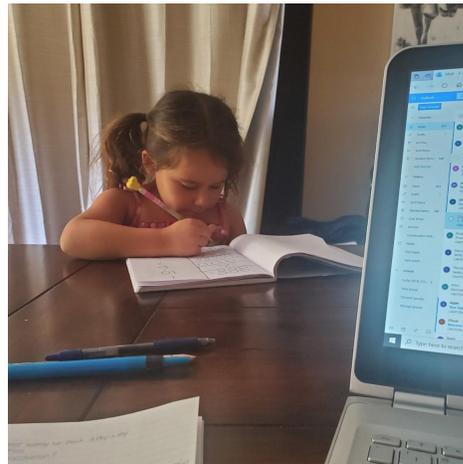
Learn more:

[Ventura County Responds, Fentanyl & Fake Pills](#)

Words from Erika: Working from Home, the Challenges of Remote Life

By Erika Fernandez, Community Services Coordinator

Over the past 15 months, working from home has been a both a pleasant experience and a struggle for me. I learned new ways of dealing with life situations, different ways to continue my outreach in the community, and spent more with my family. On top of all the stress of a pandemic, working from home was a new transition for me.



I have three children, ages 11, 5, and 10 months old and had to virtually school two of them. Many of us faced the challenges of not having dedicated work and school spaces and intermittently poor internet connection. I learned to balance childcare demands with my work demands. Occasionally one can hear my baby crying or see my children in the background during Zoom meetings. This unexpected shift in our lives helped me become more a part of my children's learning, proficient at technology and creatively expand my outreach efforts in different and positive ways. I learned to adapt to more roles in life, including mom, cook, teacher, doctor, community services coordinator, and so much more.

If you ask me how I do it, I honestly do not know; however, I can say what has helped me is practicing gratefulness and having a routine. I realized that if I was going to pull this off, I had to make sure I was taking care of my mental health—I had to find ways to reduce my stress and anxiety. Every time things would pile up with work, kids' schoolwork, or the baby being extra fussy, I would take a few minutes and think about what I was thankful for my job, the ability to work from home, time with my family, our health, our home, the food; and this would give me the fuel I needed to continue. I learned the importance of routine and

letting go of what couldn't get done. If you are experiencing this challenge too, just remember you are not alone, as we all have endured a difficult year.

Words from Alma: A New Beginning

By Alma Ixta, Community Services Coordinator

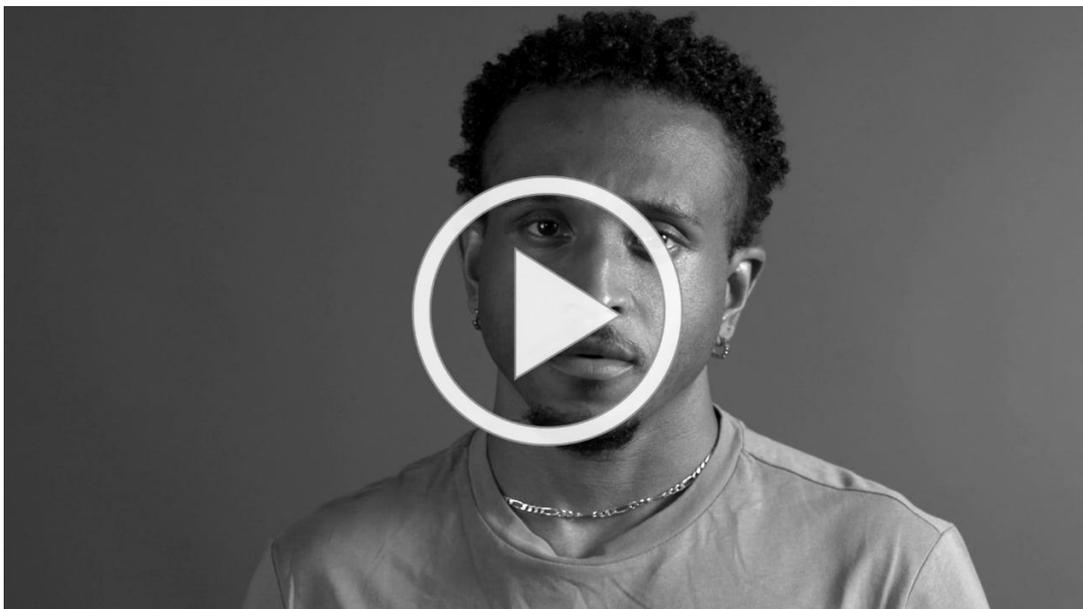
As things start to get back to normal, I reflect on when it all started. The anxiety of being without water, toilet paper and food. But here we are, a year and a half later and we are taking the steps to begin a new normal. Many of us have been remote working and schooling, and we missed the interaction with colleagues, friends, and family. I hope we all learned a new appreciation of community and the people in our lives. Let's not take for granted what and who we have in our lives and try to help others as much as we can.



Due to this pandemic we have seen a rise in the use of alcohol and other drugs. We have seen more youth experimenting with substances while home alone during distance learning. Growing up in Mexico, I remember that all neighbors would look out for each other's children. We were all raised by the community. Perhaps we can find new ways to become more involved with our neighbors and our communities. I surely hope so.

Spotlight: Meth - Don't Buy the Lie Campaign

What You Need to Know



The "Meth - Don't Buy the Lie" campaign is targeted to young

adults who may be at risk for trying meth. The goal of the campaign is to provide the truth about meth without preaching nor invoking the reflexive opposition which comes easily to people in this age range.

Learn more:

Meth - Don't Buy the Lie

www.TalkingAboutMeth.org

HablandoDeMeth.org

In the News: FDA Approves Higher Dosage of Naloxone Nasal Spray to Treat Opioid Overdose

FDA News Release, April 30, 2021

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration announced the approval of a higher dose naloxone hydrochloride nasal spray product to treat opioid overdose. The newly approved product delivers 8 milligrams (mg) of naloxone into the nasal cavity. The FDA had previously approved 2 mg and 4 mg naloxone nasal spray products.

Naloxone is a medicine that can be administered by individuals with or without medical training to help reduce opioid overdose deaths. If naloxone is administered quickly, it can counter the opioid overdose effects, usually within minutes. A higher dose of naloxone provides an additional option in the treatment of opioid overdoses.

“Today’s action meets another critical need in combatting opioid overdose,” said Patrizia Cavazzoni, M.D., director of the FDA’s Center for Drug Evaluation and Research. “Addressing the opioid crisis is a top priority for the FDA, and we will continue our efforts to increase access to naloxone and place this important medicine in the hands of those who need it most.”

Learn more:

[FDA News Release](#)

In the News: The Opioid Crisis is Personal. An Anesthesiologist Shares His Story

“If your teenager was addicted to opioids, would you know? It’s harder than you think. I lost both my sons to opioid overdoses. Looking back, every red flag is screaming at me. But I didn’t



**NO
OD**

**Could someone
you care about
overdose?**

**Call about a
Rescue Kit:
1-805-667-6663
Confidential • Free**

recognize them then.

I am an anesthesiologist who administers fentanyl every day to patients. I have also heartbreakingly lost both of my adult sons to accidental opioid overdoses. I came to understand what opioid addiction looks like from a parent's perspective, but, in the beginning stages it was very hard to detect, even for me.

Everything that I share here, I have seen up-close in my home. I'm sharing these details so other parents can understand. The typical warning signs of teen drug use are falling grades, loss of friends, or a decline in appearance. Those things never happened to my kids. My boys both excelled at sports and school and got along well with others. Each son's pathway into use was different and not simultaneous. What happened to each was slow and insidious. Pure evil, really.

All of this is why prevention is critical. Every parent must have early conversations with their kids, using language appropriate for their age and mental health. Drug use can lead to a cruel course of addiction or a near instantaneous death.

Experimentation is not harmless. Even marijuana has been altered by fentanyl. Most teens simply can't envision that a tainted Percocet pill that they try at a friend's party can render them breathless, blue, and dead. Make your messages absolutely, lovingly clear."

Read the story:

[USA Today, May 18, 2021](#)

Recap: Community Outreach Events Live

It's So Good to See You

By Alma Ixta, Community Services Coordinator

On May 6 we attended our first in-person event at the Pacifica High School Health Fair. We were kept at a safe distance apart, including the spacing between booths and attendees, and that all attendees would engage in one-way, foot traffic throughout the event. The permitted attendee amounts were reduced. They ensured the safety of all persons on-campus, and that our experience was comfortable and safe. Most of the tables were manned by the students and the students were interested in getting information from everyone in attendance. It was great to see our colleagues and students again.

On May 15 we attended the Mental Health & Social Resources Fair in Fillmore. All safety precautions were observed during the event. The stories we heard from the speakers were very heart-warming and they gave hope to others in attendance with mental

health issues, either for them or their families. To know how much COVID-19 impacted us in so many ways, yet here we are still standing and eagerly awaiting to continue our lives no matter what the new norms are, brings me hope and happiness. I was glad to have been able to participate in this event because we brought resources and information to the community. It was inspiring to hear personal stories in person and I look forward to more community events.

Calendar

We will keep you posted on upcoming events in each newsletter. If your agency is planning any online meetings, please send us the information so we can post it.

Advancing Awareness in LGBTQ Care, Part 1: History of Specialized Treatment for LGBTQ+ Clients

June 18, 12:00pm - 2:00pm, ET

NAADAC

[Register](#)

Health Equity Series: Partnering with Communities of Color to Mitigate COVID-19

June 23, 11:00am - 12:00pm, CT

Alliance for Strong Families and Communities

[Register](#)

Advancing Awareness in LGBTQ Care, Part 2: LGBTQ Youth, Community & Alcohol Misuse

July 16, 12:00pm, ET

NAADAC

[Register](#)

Helpful Resources

If you are looking for resources in the community, check out our websites. We continually add news, tips, latest research, blogs, publications and more.

Ventura County Limits

This website is a portal to help learn about our efforts to address substance use challenges in our communities.

www.venturacountylimits.org

Ventura County Responds

This website tracks what is being done in Ventura County to address the opioid crisis and provides the latest information for prescribers and community members.

venturacountyresponds.org

Marijuana FactCheck

See the latest findings and research related to cannabis and our kid's health.

www.mjfactcheck.org

Vaping FactCheck

Learn about the risks of vaping and the impact on teens. Keep informed about the latest research and news.

www.vapingfactcheckvc.org

Social Determinants of Health

The Social Determinants of Health website provides resources, news, and features community agencies or “Drivers of Change” who are working to building healthier communities through individual, organizational and community wide effort and engagement.

www.healthequityvc.org

Ventura County Behavioral Health

The Ventura County Behavioral Health Department (VCBH) provides mental health and substance use treatment services. Learn about our services and how to access help.

vcbh.org

About Us

Supporting Health – Preventing Harm

Substance Use Prevention Services works upstream to reduce alcohol and drug-related problems in our community. Initiatives are aimed at limiting harms related to impaired driving; underage and binge drinking; marijuana and vaping, especially as it relates to harms to youth; prescription drug abuse; and addressing health disparities among vulnerable populations.

A primary goal is to delay the onset of first use of alcohol and or other drugs by youth. We collaborate with schools, parent groups, government agencies, medical partners, law enforcement, community-based organizations and more.

Contact Us

Erika Fernandez,

Erika.Fernandez@ventura.org

Alma Ixta,

Alma.Ixta@ventura.org

*Photo: Alma Ixta and Erika Fernandez
pre-COVID-19.*



STAY CONNECTED

