

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Issue 21 • July 2021

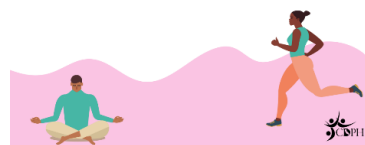


Moving Forward

“On June 15, 2021, the State of California reopened and lifted most COVID-19 restrictions. Thank you Ventura County for your commitment to protecting each other and helping our community move forward!” — County of Ventura


**California is
now open**

For the past year, since March 2020, we have been documenting our work, staying in touch, developing media campaigns and remaining vital during every phase of COVID-19, from the beginning of the stay at



home order, to opening our county as of June 15, 2021. This is a new phase for all of us in our county. We will continue to share photos of what this looks like as we travel, go back to school and work, eat at restaurants, visit with family and friends and more.

Learn more:

www.venturacountyrecovers.org

Spotlight: Fentanyl & Fake Pills

Raising Awareness



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.

DID YOU KNOW

that our community is **AT RISK** from fentanyl?

Anyone who takes a drug that isn't prescribed for them may accidentally take fentanyl.

- Our local opioid epidemic has been worsened by a recent influx of illegal fentanyl, which is sometimes mixed in with other drugs.
- If your doctor didn't prescribe medication for you or a family member, there's no way to know what's really inside a pill.
- Fentanyl is so strong that even a tiny amount can lead to overdose and death for people of any age.

Did you know that you could save a life with an Overdose Rescue Kit?

Call 1-805-667-6663. It's confidential and free.

LEARN MORE:
www.VenturaCountyResponds.org

NO OD

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](#)

Spotlight: New Partners in Opioid Overdose Prevention

It Takes a Village

*By Kirsti V. Thompson, Director,
Give an Hour California*

We have all heard the saying “*It takes a village.*” Our story is “*It takes a transportation center.*” Our new “village” is serving the needs of the Oxnard Transit Center and the surrounding community.

In early 2020, VCBH was contacted by Gold Coast Transportation Services. They shared that a team of bus operators who work in the

Oxnard area had concerns about drug use paraphernalia left behind at the Oxnard Transit Center, which is located in downtown Oxnard and is the busiest transportation center in our region. They reached out for our help.

The Overdose Prevention Program was founded in 2014 and offers outreach, training, and access to Overdose Rescue Kits to those who qualify in Ventura County. Ashley Nettles, Program Manager of the Overdose Prevention Program offered training and overdose kits to the Gold Coast team. Since then, a collaborative work group was born! Members from Ventura County Public Health, Oxnard Police Department, VCBH, City of Oxnard, and Gold Coast Transit met virtually several times to identify the issues that were contributing to the problem and brainstorm ways to solve it.

One of the initial issues identified was ensuring that the resources that are available are promoted to those who may benefit from them. Instead of ignoring the problems with drug use and paraphernalia at the Transit Center, or simply calling the police, the collaborative recommended developing an outreach tool that highlights the local social services that could help. A bilingual resource card was developed.

The resource cards are on display at the Oxnard Transit Center and on the buses that travel through that area. Gold Coast drivers and managers have been trained in Opioid Overdose Response, and Opioid Overdose Rescue Kits are now kept on hand at the Transit Center and with Gold Coast Field Managers.

This a new project, and we recognize it is a relatively small step in the big world of substance abuse and homelessness in Ventura County. We also know that it takes true collaboration (a real village!) to get meaningful work accomplished, and we are thankful to all who worked on this initial village building, and will continue to work together to take steps together to address the big issues we face.

Learn more:

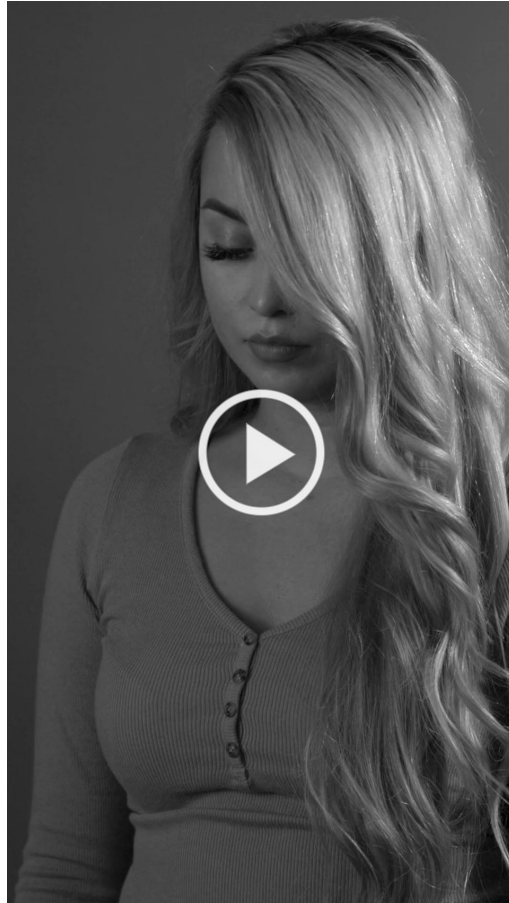
www.safechoicesvc.org

www.safechoicesvc.org/es



Spotlight:
Meth - Don't Buy the Lie Campaign

Spreading the Word in the Community





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.

In June 2021, VCBH launched a Meth - Don't Buy the Lie media campaign spanning several advertising channels. As part of this campaign, attention-catching geo-targeted messages were displayed at selected locations throughout the county. All materials were developed and displayed in both English and Spanish.

While the truck is driving, it displays a slideshow of images. When parked, it switches to video formats with audio playing on speakers. Captions are included with the videos. The mobile billboard truck features two 12-foot horizontal displays at each side, and a square display at its back.

See our campaign in action!

Learn more:

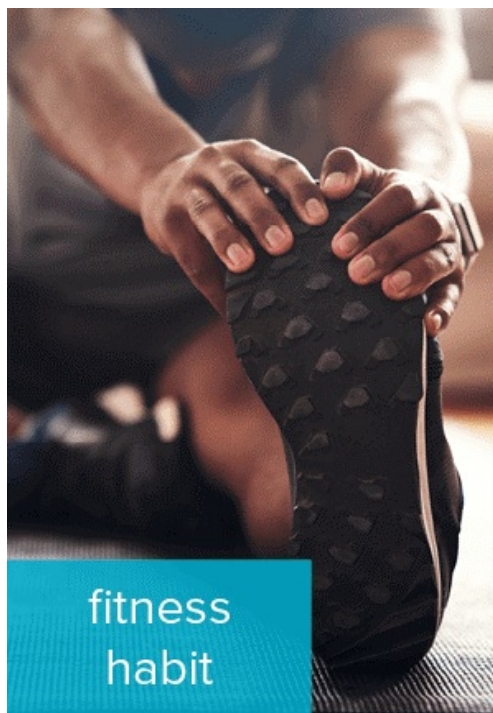
Meth - Don't Buy the Lie

www.TalkingAboutMeth.org

HablandoDeMeth.org

Spotlight: Healthy Habits Campaign

Reset Time!



fitness
habit



overeating
habit



The whole country is emerging from a year of COVID. It's an exciting time of potential and opportunity. It's perhaps the best time ever to hit the reset button and begin living your best life. But it can also be a scary time of change. Again.

It's a good time to check in with yourself and your loved ones. The journey of the last year has been difficult for all and extremely difficult for some. Many of us have developed new habits, both good and bad.

Take time to reflect on where you are now and where you'd like to be. Which habits you'd like to continue and grow and which habits you might want to pull back or drop entirely. It's time to live your best life!

What habits did you develop last year?

- Am I eating more often?
- What kinds of foods am I eating?
- Am I drinking alcohol more?
- Am I exercising? As often?
- Am I spending quality time with my family?
- Am I spending too much time online?
- Am I vaping? More? Around others?

See the campaign PSAs throughout all the DMVs in Ventura County.

Learn more:

www.vcbh.org/habits

www.vcbh.org/habitos

Spotlight: Secondhand Vaping Campaign

What You Need to Know About the Risks of Vaping



Your vape contains a lot of unknown and potentially harmful substances. You might decide you want to vape anyway, but what about the people around you? What about the people you love? Some people are particularly sensitive to being harmed by the substances in secondhand vape - there are simple things you can do to protect them.

See our latest video about the risks of secondhand vaping. We developed this campaign to address the health risks related to vaping and how it can affect others. The *historieta* format shares the information through engaging short stories and highlights how vaping can affect children and other family members. The goal is to increase awareness that can lead to a safer home environment, especially for children who may be most vulnerable.

Learn more:

Secondhand Vaping Historietas

English videos: www.vapingfactcheckvc.org

Spanish videos: www.vapeoverificado.org

Research Update: Start a Conversation: 10 Questions Teens Ask About Drugs and Health

What Parents Need to Know

By Alma Ixta, Community Services Coordinator

The goal of the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) is to help people get accurate, science-based information about drugs and health. For the past decade, researchers at NIDA have set aside a Chat Day each year during National Drug and Alcohol Facts Week® to answer questions teens have about drugs and health. They have compiled teens' 10 frequently asked questions from more than 118,000 queries we've received. This can help parents start a conversation about drugs and their kid's health.

These are very interesting questions from teens, from "Why do people use drugs?" to "If someone needs help, how can I help if they don't want help" and "What is the worst drug?". NIDA has included the answers to all these questions along with very useful pictures, charts and visuals to help youth get a good explanation.

Check out this interesting article to learn more about the questions that most of our youth have.

Learn more:

National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA)

[Start A Conversation: 10 Questions Teens Ask About Drugs and Health](#)

In the News: Adolescent Marijuana, Alcohol Use Held Steady During COVID-19

Adolescent marijuana use and binge drinking did not significantly change during the COVID-19 pandemic, despite record decreases in the substances' perceived availability, according to a survey of 12th graders in the United States. The study's findings, which appeared online on June 24, 2021, in Drug and Alcohol Dependence, challenge the idea that reducing adolescent use of drugs can be achieved solely by limiting their supply. In contrast to consistent rates of marijuana and alcohol use, nicotine vaping in high school seniors declined during the pandemic, along with declines in perceived availability of vaping devices at this time.

"Last year brought dramatic changes to adolescents' lives, as many teens remained home with parents and other family members full time," said NIDA Director Nora D. Volkow, M.D. "It is striking that despite this monumental shift and teens' perceived decreases in availability of marijuana and alcohol, usage rates held steady for these substances. This indicates that teens were able to obtain them despite barriers caused by the pandemic and despite not being of age to legally purchase them."

The data for the study came from the annual Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey of substance use behaviors and related attitudes among adolescents in the United States.

Despite the reported declines in marijuana and alcohol

availability, the levels of use of these substances did not change significantly. The study authors cite the wide availability of alcohol and marijuana, even during the pandemic, as a factor in the continued use of these substances. While pandemic-related restrictions limited social interactions, and even with record-breaking decreases in perceived availability among participants, most students said they still had access to marijuana and alcohol. In addition, the authors suggest that when the substances became less available, the students may have intensified their efforts to obtain them.

While a dip in the perceived supply of vaping devices may have contributed to the decline in nicotine vaping that occurred during the pandemic, there may have been other factors as well. The federal minimum age for tobacco product purchases, including vaping devices and liquids, rose from 18 to 21 years and went into effect in early 2020. News reports on vaping-induced lung injuries may have also had a chilling effect on usage.

“These findings suggest that reducing adolescent substance use through attempts to restrict supply alone would be a difficult undertaking,” said Richard A. Miech, Ph.D., lead author of the paper and team lead of the Monitoring the Future study at the University of Michigan. “The best strategy is likely to be one that combines approaches to limit the supply of these substances with efforts to decrease demand, through educational and public health campaigns.”

Source: NIDA. 2021, June 24. Adolescent marijuana, alcohol use held steady during COVID-19 pandemic. Retrieved from <https://www.drugabuse.gov/news-events/news-releases/2021/06/adolescent-marijuana-alcohol-use-held-steady-during-covid-19-pandemic> on 2021, June 30

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.

Policy Implications of COVID-19 on Alcohol and Marijuana Use

July 15, 11:00am, PT

Great Lakes ATTC, MHTTC, and PTTC

[Register](#)

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

July 16, 12:00pm, ET

NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals

[Register](#)

Environmental Strategies to Prevent and Reduce Substance Use

July 21, 10:00am, CT
Central East PTTC
[Register](#)

Providing Inclusive & Integrated Services to LGBTQ+ Individuals
July 27, 10:00am, ET
National Council for Mental Wellbeing
[Register](#)

Founded in 1969, the National Council for Mental Wellbeing is a membership organization that drives policy and social change on behalf of nearly 3,500 mental health and substance use treatment organizations and the more than 10 million children, adults and families they serve.

NWATTC Webinar: Harm Reduction Service Use and Delivery: Lessons Learned from Vancouver, Canada
July 28, 12:00pm, PT
Northwest ATTC
[Register](#)

Treating the Heart of Addiction
August 11, 3:00pm, ET
NAADAC, the Association for Addiction Professionals
[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

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

Follow us on Social Media

www.facebook.com/VCBehavioralHealth
www.facebook.com/venturacountylimits
twitter.com/vclimits

Check out our Newsletters

www.venturacountylimits.org/community-connections
www.healthequityvc.org/newsletters

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

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

Photos by Alma Ixta: Fillmore PRIDE event



STAY CONNECTED

