

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

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Featured Campaign: Fentanyl is Forever



“It all started with painkillers my brother was given for routine knee surgery.” - the Sister

Reflecting the United States struggles with tragic drug overdoses exceeding 100,000 deaths in 12 months, Ventura County's local accidental fatal overdoses have also risen dramatically. In both cases, the increases are driven and sustained by illegal fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid that has flooded the illicit drug supply.

In response to the covert dangers of fentanyl, Ventura County Behavioral Health (VCBH) just released a new community campaign, "Fentanyl is Forever" (English) and "El Fentanilo es para Siempre" (Spanish). The prevention messages unfold through five diverse short stories that allow people to experience and understand the risks of fentanyl to their friends, families, and communities. In addition to warning the public about the dangers of fentanyl, viewers are then linked to local resources for more information and help.

The goals of the campaign are to increase awareness of fentanyl risks and its impact on communities, and to decrease the stigma related to talking about substance misuse and addiction. It complements messaging related to naloxone preparedness and substance use disorder treatment.

Learn more:

Campaign Websites

www.FentanylVenturaCounty.org - English

www.FentaniloVentura.com - Spanish

Ventura County Responds

www.venturacountyresponds.org/preventing-overdose

Words from Alma

Visiting My Traditions of Home

By Alma Ixta, Community Services Coordinator

Before 2021 ended, I visited my family in Mexico. I hadn't been able to visit due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Needless to say, many things had changed. One big change that I observed was the decrease in the alcohol intake in my community. It seemed like Covid-19 educated us about the things that truly mattered and the things that were hurting them as a family. We had endless conversations about what it meant to still be alive and the heartache it caused for many people who died for not believing that Covid-19 really existed and how vulnerable we all were.



Ciudad de Mexico has a population of 21+ million people. It can be alienating at first but the people of Mexico are generous and friendly, the subcultures are diverse and neighbors are always happy to have a conversation with you. Communities were hit hard, but they still continue to put up fights for social justice. The public spaces are great and parks offer free Wi-Fi to all.

We were blessed to be a part of a very ancient tradition that happens in December. We stayed up all night on December 11th waiting for it to be midnight so we can sing to our Virgin of Guadalupe. We ate tamales and coffee right after that. At 5:00 am we participated in a special blessing done by my husband, Deacon Ignacio Ixta, with several members of my family from Mexico present. Right after that we ate traditional Mexican pozole, a rich, brothy soup made with pork, hominy, and red chiles, that had been cooking all night long. Although it was a very cold night, we all felt very happy to be there and be a part of this tradition no matter the weather. We talked about so many life stories during that night that we didn't realize time was passing by so fast. One thing I realized that no matter my love for Mexico, I am very grateful that my parents were able to bring me and my siblings to the U.S.

My experience visiting my hometown was a great one and I hope that others have the opportunity to get to know the rich culture of Mexico. This in many ways has helped me in my job with Prevention as it helps me understand my community firsthand and it allows me to try to serve them better.

Many need respect and kindness when faced with adversity in a country they don't know or don't feel a part of. I extend my gratitude to our partners that work hard to serve our Latinx and Mixteco communities, and vulnerable populations that you serve to make their lives better.

Here is to a better 2022. Happy New Year everyone!

Photo: Alma Ixta and Ignacio Ixta, Community Services Coordinators, in Mexico

Featured Video: Medication Safety at Home

Ventura County Responds



Every month, we will be featuring one of our Prevention Services Initiatives. This month we are focusing on Prescription Drug Abuse, and our efforts to address overdose risks in Ventura County. One aspect that we focused on this past year is medication safety at home and safe disposal of prescription medications. This feature emphasizes educating our families and keeping our homes safe.

Keeping Children Safe

Child-resistant doesn't mean child-proof. Secure your prescription and over-the-counter medications, including medical cannabis, out-of-reach from young children as well as teens. Child-resistant packaging helps but is no guarantee of safety. Here are some tips:

- Properly dispose of expired and unused medications
- Use special care with medications that look like candy
- Call your local Police Department for safe, confidential drop-off bins

Don't Make It Easy. Lock Up Your Meds.

- Keep track of pill quantities
- Properly dispose of unused medications
- Block access to online pharmacies and drug sources
- Participate in county prescription drug take-back days
- Learn the facts on Rx drug abuse
- Talk about it

Check out our Ventura County Responds website and share the "Let's Talk About Opioids" Video with your partners. This website is an overview of how we are addressing the opioid crisis in Ventura County.

Learn more:

[Ventura County Responds, Medication Safety](#)

En español: www.MedicamentosSeguros.com

New Resources from Industry Partners

Stay Informed of Recent News & Research

Short Takes with NIAAA

This new NIAAA video series consists of brief 60-second videos that explain, in an easy-to-understand way, the meanings of commonly used-but often misunderstood-alcohol terms. These include videos on alcohol use disorder, blackouts, alcohol overdose in both Spanish and English, and binge drinking.

Learn more:

[NIAAA Video Series](#)

National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA)

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Overdose Prevention Strategy

Addressing the overdose crisis is a top priority of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This issue brief discusses the Strategy in greater detail, including the objectives under each priority area, associated activities, and guiding principles.

- The overdose crisis is largely driven by synthetic opioids, predominantly illicitly manufactured fentanyl. Drug overdoses involving psychostimulants such as methamphetamine are also increasing, both with and without synthetic opioid involvement.
- The public health burden of drug overdose expands far beyond the devastating impact of overdose deaths to other consequences of substance use disorders (SUDs), including nonfatal overdose. The human cost of this crisis also has a radiating impact on families, caregivers, and communities.
- The HHS Overdose Prevention Strategy reflects the Biden-Harris Administration principles of equity for underserved populations and evidence-based policy by being more inclusive of all populations affected. It also prioritizes translating research into equitable practice, and it identifies ways to further our understanding of how to mitigate overdose harms.

Learn more:

[U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Overdose Prevention Strategy, Issue Brief](#), October 27, 2021
[HHS Overdose Prevention Strategy](#)

The State of Local Cannabis Policy in California Cities & Counties: 2021 Scorecards

These scorecards, produced by PHI's Getting it Right from the Start Project, evaluate the policies passed by California cities and counties that allow cannabis sales.

The Scorecards highlight jurisdictions that are making positive steps in adopting cannabis regulations that protect youth and public health, and demonstrate the gaps in protections in many other localities. This provides policymakers, health advocates and others the only comprehensive guide to understanding and comparing the policies and trends on cannabis regulations throughout the state.

Learn more:
[Public Health Institute](#)

Percentage of adolescents reporting drug use decreased significantly in 2021 as the COVID-19 pandemic endured

The percentage of adolescents reporting substance use decreased significantly in 2021, according to the latest results from the Monitoring the Future survey of substance use behaviors and related attitudes among eighth, 10th, and 12th graders in the United States. In line with continued long-term declines in the use of many illicit substances among adolescents previously reported by the Monitoring the Future survey, these findings represent the largest one-year decrease in overall illicit drug use reported since the survey began in 1975.

Learn more:
NIDA. 2021, December 15. [Percentage of adolescents reporting drug use decreased significantly in 2021 as the COVID-19 pandemic endured.](#)

U.S. Surgeon General Issues Advisory on Youth Mental Health Crisis Further Exposed by COVID-19 Pandemic

U.S. Surgeon General Dr. Vivek Murthy issued a Surgeon General's Advisory to highlight the urgent need to address the nation's youth mental health crisis.

"Mental health challenges in children, adolescents, and young adults are real and widespread. Even before the pandemic, an alarming number of young people struggled with feelings of helplessness, depression, and thoughts of suicide – and rates have increased over the past decade." said Surgeon General Vivek Murthy. "The COVID-19 pandemic further altered their experiences at home, school, and in the community, and the effect on their mental health has been devastating. The future

wellbeing of our country depends on how we support and invest in the next generation. Especially in this moment, as we work to protect the health of Americans in the face of a new variant, we also need to focus on how we can emerge stronger on the other side. This advisory shows us how we can all work together to step up for our children during this dual crisis.”

Learn more:

[U.S. Surgeon General Issues Advisory on Youth Mental Health Crisis Further Exposed by COVID-19 Pandemic](#), U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, December 7, 2021

Local News: Despite opposition, Oxnard cannabis dispensary moves closer to opening

A cannabis dispensary in Oxnard is moving closer to opening its doors, despite opposition from neighboring property owners.

Learn more:

[Despite opposition, Oxnard cannabis dispensary moves closer to opening](#), *Ventura County Star*, December 15, 2021

Calendar

We will keep you posted on upcoming events in each newsletter.



Big Ideas in Overdose Prevention for 2022

January 26, 11:00 AM, PT

National Overdose Prevention Network (NOPN)

[Register](#)

Circle of Care Monthly Meeting

1st Wednesday of every month at 1:00pm

Contact: Ana Rosa Rizo-Centino anarosa@myonestep.org for Zoom link

Oxnard Police Department Outreach Coordinator Meeting

1st Wednesday of every month at 10:30am

Contact: Teresa Telles teresa.telles@oxnardpd.org for Zoom link

Helpful Resources

If you are looking for resources in the community, check out our websites. We continually add news, campaigns and more.



Ventura County Limits

www.venturacountylimits.org

Ventura County Responds
venturacountyresponds.org
[COAST Opioid Data Dashboard](#)

Vaping FactCheck
www.vapingfactcheckvc.org

Social Determinants of Health
www.healthequityvc.org

Ventura County Behavioral Health
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
Coast Newsletters
www.venturacountyresponds.org/news-updates

About Us

Supporting Health – Preventing Harm

Ventura County Behavioral Health, Substance Use Services - Prevention, 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 and community-based organizations.

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Photo: Alma Ixta and Erika Fernandez



STAY CONNECTED

