

Parent letter: Alert on the dangers of rainbow fentanyl

Dear Parents/Guardians:

The health and safety of our students and staff are a high priority at _____. Therefore, I wanted to make you aware of some concerning trends we are seeing in California and in San Diego County around opioids, specifically the drug fentanyl.

[Fentanyl](#), an extremely potent and dangerous synthetic opioid, 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.

The United States Drug Enforcement Agency recently identified a new trend in which [“rainbow fentanyl”](#) appears in bright colors and in many forms, including pills, powder, and blocks that can resemble sidewalk chalk or candy. It can resemble the candy Smarties, so we feel it’s especially important to be alert around Halloween time.

Please share with your children that 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. Oftentimes, people purchasing or taking these pills are unaware that they contain fentanyl.

[INSERT WHAT YOUR DISTRICT IS DOING AROUND DRUG PREVENTION EDUCATION: EXAMPLE: DISTRICT continues to work with partners, law enforcement, and county officials, on providing families and staff with drug prevention and education information relating to concerns in our communities.]

Things You Can Do

1. If you’re concerned someone in your life is at risk for opioid overdose, have on-hand the overdose reversal medication **naloxone (Narcan)**. Narcan has no adverse side effects and is available without a physician prescription at most pharmacies. [INSERT HERE IF YOUR SCHOOL IS EQUIPPED WITH NALOXONE]
2. If you find **any** pills that you are unfamiliar with, **do not touch them**. Call local law enforcement for removal.
3. Speak with your student about this information so they know the risks of buying or sharing prescription medication or other drugs, and that fake pills are out there.
4. Call local law enforcement if you or your student have seen these rainbow-colored pills. Speaking up may save a friend’s life!
5. Contact the 24/7 Mental Health & Substance Use Access & Assessment Hotline (888-724-7240) to get help for a friend or loved one struggling with substance abuse.

According to the [California Department of Public Health \(CDPH\)](#) 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. Additionally, 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.

In San Diego, we saw more than 1,100 overdose deaths in 2021, compared to 976 in 2020. In 2021, 22 young people under the age of 21, and 12 teens under the age of 18 died from overdose. While the statistics in San Diego are less alarming, losing one child to overdose is one too many.

As a school community, it's important for us all to be informed and work in partnership to keep our students safe. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact _____.

Sincerely,