



COMBATting FENTANYL WITH ACTIONS AND RESOURCES

The growing number of fentanyl overdoses is indeed a crisis among our youth, and State Superintendent of Public Instruction Tony Thurmond is calling on schools and partners to continue to do everything possible to braid together new and ongoing resources and programming to address this challenge. By working together, educators, health experts, community partners, and families can better provide the critical supports to help keep our students informed, healthy, and safe.

TAKING ACTION, PROVIDING RESOURCES

Webinars

The California Department of Education (CDE) has been working with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) to provide our schools and districts with resources and information that they can readily share with parents and students to help keep them safe. We co-hosted webinars with our partners at the CDPH on September 28 and October 12, 2022. We encourage all local educational agencies (LEAs) to view the webinars on the CDPH YouTube page at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Vmb76t6CC3Q>.

Resources from Public Agencies

It is important that we educate, prepare, and equip those working closest with students and families with the latest information and guidance on how to use all the tools we have at our disposal. Partnering with the CDPH, we have a shareable Fentanyl Awareness and Prevention toolkit page available at <https://schools.covid19.ca.gov/pages/share>, and more resources are on the CDPH Substance and Addiction Prevention Branch web page at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/sapb/Pages/OPI-landing.aspx>.

State lawmakers adopted AB 1748, which went into effect in 2017 and authorized school districts, county offices of education, and charter schools to obtain FDA-approved opioid antagonists to administer in the event of an opioid overdose. We are working with our districts on how to develop and implement a local school naloxone (Narcan) policy. Schools should train staff on how to safely store and administer Narcan. As an example, see the Lake County Office of Education local school naloxone policy at <https://nopn.org/resources/lake-county-office-of-education-naloxone-policy>. We also encourage schools to provide peer-to-peer resources and parent engagement opportunities.

Please see these additional resources aimed at curbing the fentanyl epidemic:

- The CDPH Statewide Standing Order for Naloxone web page at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/sapb/Pages/Naloxone-Standing-Order.aspx>
- The Department of Health Care Service (DHCS) Naloxone Distribution Project web page at https://www.dhcs.ca.gov/individuals/Pages/Naloxone_Distribution_Project.aspx
- The CDPH Fentanyl web page at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/sapb/Pages/Fentanyl.aspx>
- CDPH guidance regarding rainbow fentanyl at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/sapb/Pages/Rainbow-Fentanyl-Alert.aspx>
- General information regarding Naloxone from the CDPH at <https://www.cdph.ca.gov/Programs/CCDPHP/sapb/Pages/Naloxone.aspx>
- Fresno County fentanyl resources flyer at <https://www.co.fresno.ca.us/resources/fentanyl-danger-in-fresno-county>
- The California Safe Schools For All Hub at <https://schools.covid19.ca.gov/>

THE IMPORTANCE OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE PREVENTION AND HEALTH EDUCATION

Health education is a powerful, comprehensive, theory-driven, evidence-based platform from which to educate, inform, and empower youth to make well-informed decisions that lead to positive practices that promote a lifetime of good physical, mental, social, and emotional health.

High-quality, standards-based health education is centered on building skills and increasing health literacy for all students. Health literacy, as defined by the World Health Organization, is the combination of cognitive and social skills that determine the motivation and ability of individuals to gain access to, understand, and use information and services in ways that promote and maintain good health. The goal is to improve students' health and education outcomes by working with educators, families, and communities to prevent substance use among youth.

The Health Education Framework

As you know, California's Health Education Framework includes substance use prevention for students of all ages—starting with general lessons for the youngest students about the importance of putting healthy things in one's body and resisting peer pressure, and

eventually leading to detailed lessons for older students on the effects of illicit drugs on adolescent brain development. The idea is to connect health with life skills such as thinking critically, making good decisions, setting goals, and developing positive relationships.

At a minimum, instruction in alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs (ATOD) must occur in kindergarten and grades two, four, six, and middle school and high school. Students should begin to demonstrate refusal skills as early as second grade, learn to identify the outside influences that affect drug use in fourth grade, and progress to identifying the legal impacts drug use can have on one's life in sixth grade. From there, students are asked to role-play responsible decision-making skills regarding opioids and practice saying no or walking away from the situation, and, in the seventh grade, students begin to look at the statistics around opioid use and deaths due to overdose and consider how opioids could affect them. These are just some examples of opioid-specific instruction students receive throughout our public-school system.

More School Health Resources

For more resources, please visit the California Health Education website at <https://californiahealtheducation.org/Pages/Home.aspx>.

ACCESS TO COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORT

We know that the spike in all forms of substance abuse among adolescents is connected to a broader mental health crisis so serious that the US Surgeon General has identified it as a public health emergency. The COVID-19 global pandemic has exacerbated the mental health challenges faced by our students and their families. Our schools cannot turn away from this crisis. There has never been a more important moment to increase easily accessible school-based mental health services, substance abuse intervention, and supportive resources for families in crisis.

Many LEAs have reported positive outcomes when they have offered substance abuse intervention services on campus in partnership with local community-based organizations. Harm reduction models that emphasize supportive rather than punitive approaches to intervention are especially interesting.

Please see the CDE Mental Health web page at <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/mh/> for information and resources.

Bringing More Mental Health Professionals to Schools

Student, family, staff, and community well-being remains top priority as we emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic. A primary focus during the last session of the California State Legislature was State Superintendent Thurmond's initiative to ensure recruitment of 10,000 new counselors and mental health professionals. As a result, aspiring counselors, school social workers, and school psychologists are now eligible for the Golden State Teacher Grant Program, which will ensure their graduate education will be almost free of charge if they commit to serve in a California public school. More information about the program is available at <https://gstg.csac.ca.gov/>. As we look to the immediate future, this new cadre of school-based mental health professionals will significantly increase our capacity to provide intervention services and also lower our counselor ratios so that substance abuse can be proactively identified and prevented before it starts.

Funding for Student Mental Health

California has made a historic \$7.9 billion general fund investment in learning recovery grants to allow our schools to increase instructional time and provide literacy interventions, high-dosage individualized tutoring, and mental health support and services to our students. Additionally, schools can use Title IV funds for activities related to supporting safe and healthy students.

Community Connections

The CDE urges LEAs to grow and expand community partnerships that can bring trusted and proven prevention and intervention resources to campus. The CDE partnered with the DHCS to launch the California Youth Behavioral Health Initiative, which will offer an unprecedented level of family mental health and wellness services on campuses through several different components of this new program. Read more on the Children and Youth Behavioral Health Initiative web page at <https://www.chhs.ca.gov/home/children-and-youth-behavioral-health-initiative/>. We are also leading the implementation of our nation's largest investment to expand the community schools model across our state. This innovative school transformation approach will allow for the expansion and deepening of integrated student service delivery on campuses throughout the state.

Assessing Student Needs and Emergencies

School counselors can build relationships with our students and can look into the student's mental health and overall well-being. We need to look into whether students need mental health support, better coping skills, or if their family need support. We also need to get the word out so educators, family members, and students all recognize the signs of opioid overdose: small, constricted, pinpoint pupils; falling asleep or losing consciousness; slow, weak, or no breathing; choking or gurgling sounds; limp body; cold and/or clammy skin; and discolored skin (especially lips and nails).