



## COUNTY OF FRESNO

Lisa A. Smittcamp  
District Attorney

### NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

February 10, 2021

## **District Attorney Lisa Smittcamp Issues Public Warning About Increase in Fentanyl Related Overdoses and Deaths**

Law enforcement officials across the state are warning the public about an increase in overdoses connected to the highly potent and often deadly drug, fentanyl. Although fentanyl related deaths and overdoses span all age groups, the Fresno County District Attorney's Office is warning about the increase in teenagers and young adults ingesting counterfeit pills laced with fentanyl believing them to be alprazolam (commonly known as Xanax) or some form of oxycodone (such as Percocet, Vicodin or OxyContin). These fentanyl-laced drugs are actively trafficked by drug-dealers through Snapchat and other teen-friendly social media platforms, and pandemic related isolation continues to increase the risks of substance abuse for many of residents.

District Attorney Smittcamp said, "This is not just a violation of the law, this is a public health crisis.

Parents, teachers, and guardians need to know that children and young adults are engaging in this potentially deadly behavior.

Users need to know that they are not always getting what they bargained for. These pills are lethal...Users want to get high, they do not want to die.

These pills are causing a rash of overdoses and some are resulting in death. The number of fentanyl related overdoses and deaths has increased significantly from 2019 to 2020 as our young people are dealing with the stress and anxiety brought on by the COVID 19 pandemic, and drug dealers and drug cartels are taking advantage of their vulnerable state.

Counterfeit pills laced with fentanyl are on the streets of Fresno County. Dealers, who are often gang members, are communicating with children via social media sites and some are even delivering the drugs to the home of the user. Dealers are being contacted by the young people by simply using a hashtag, and the connections are made.

I implore parents and guardians: Educate yourself and talk to your children about the dangers of using illicit drugs. It is imperative that they are warned about the life-long disabilities that can

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**February is "Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month"**

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result from an overdose, and the fact that they may die from just one pill that is laced with fentanyl.”

Fresno Police Chief Paco Balderrama stated, “Fentanyl and other dangerous drugs pose a great risk to our community. The Fresno Police Department is working together with our local, state, and federal partners to keep fentanyl laced drugs away from our youth, and to arrest and prosecute those who bring and sell these drugs in our community.”

The District Attorney’s Office is partnering with Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, Jim Yovino, to provide educational materials and information for the county’s school districts to disseminate to their students and parents in an effort to assist in the education process.

As District Attorney Smittcamp explains, “We are very fortunate in Fresno County, not only to have collaborative partnerships with local law enforcement agencies, but we have a dedicated team of federal partners from the Drug Enforcement Administration, Homeland Security Investigations, the Federal Bureau of Investigations, and the United States Attorney’s Office that are actively investigating these dealers and willing to help educate the community about the dangers we are facing with these pills on the street.”

Fentanyl, a synthetic opioid, is 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine, and up to 50 times more potent than heroin. Even tiny doses, as little as two milligrams, the size of two grains of salt, is a fatal dose for most people.

Treating fentanyl overdoses often requires additional naloxone (aka Narcan) to reverse the effects of the drug. Naloxone is a medication that temporarily blocks the toxic effects of opioids, or “reverses” an opioid overdose. More doses of naloxone are sometimes needed to reverse fentanyl overdoses, compared to other opioid overdoses, due to the potency of fentanyl.

The media may email [FCDAMedia@fresnocountyca.gov](mailto:FCDAMedia@fresnocountyca.gov) with any questions.

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