



COUNTY OF FRESNO

Lisa A. Smittcamp
District Attorney

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
APRIL 8, 2022

District Attorney Smittcamp and Police Chief Balderrama Warn Public of Fentanyl Overdose Events

Earlier this week, the Drug Enforcement Administration issued a nationwide warning due to a spike in fentanyl-related mass-overdose events occurring over the last two months. As our friends and families approach spring break, graduation season and the summer months, District Attorney Lisa Smittcamp and Fresno Police Chief Paco Balderrama want to remind the community that, despite increased awareness, the presence of fentanyl on our streets and fentanyl related overdoses continue to be a major public health and public safety crisis.

Fentanyl is driving the nationwide overdose epidemic. The CDC estimates that in the 12-month period ending in October 2021, more than 105,000 Americans died of drug overdoses, with 66 percent of those deaths related to synthetic opioids like fentanyl. Last year, the United States suffered more fentanyl-related deaths than gun and auto accident-related deaths combined.

“Fentanyl is a true danger to our entire community. Not only is it 100 times more addicting than heroin, but its use is also resulting in more overdose-related deaths than any other illegal drug we have seen in recent history,” said Chief Paco Balderrama. “Last year alone, members of the Fentanyl Overdose Resolution Team (FORT) here in Fresno responded to 84 overdoses, with 34 of them resulting in death. Even with the recent success of ‘Operation Killer High’ which resulted in 17 drug trafficking suspects being charged with Federal offenses, the threat that this drug poses to our community remains. Every state in our great nation is being impacted. The Fresno Police Department is committed to combatting this rising threat and we proudly stand by our local, state, and federal partners as enforcement action is taken to remove this drug and those who sell it off our streets.”

The District Attorney’s Office and the County of Fresno have partnered with the Fresno Police Department, Fresno Sheriff’s Office, DEA, Homeland Security Investigations, the Fresno County Superintendent of Schools, local media partners and the Departments of Public and Behavioral Health on a multi-faceted fentanyl awareness campaign that started last July. In addition to press events and participating in the “Killer High” documentary produced by ABC 30, this partnership has raised awareness by sharing educational messages on billboards, television, movie theatres, at high schools, through social media platforms and have used geo-fencing technology to warn some of our most vulnerable communities on the dangers of fentanyl. This public awareness campaign

is ongoing and has expanded by adding Univision as a partner to reach Spanish-speaking communities.

“As the Fresno County District Attorney, I am committed to doing all I can to protect our community, especially our children and young adults, from the potentially lethal dangers of fentanyl,” said District Attorney Lisa Smittcamp. “Together with our partners in education, public health and law enforcement, we will continue to raise awareness on the dangers fentanyl to help save lives. But we cannot do this alone, so I urge every parent or guardian to speak to your children and young adults about the life-or-death consequences of fentanyl use, its increased prevalence on our streets in counterfeit pills, methamphetamine, cocaine, and marijuana. Please take the time to engage with your children and young adults about their social media use, as drug dealers continue to use this medium to sell drugs, many of which are laced with lethal amounts of fentanyl.”

We want to encourage everyone to have NARCAN (naloxone HCl) on hand in your home even if you do not suspect fentanyl use. NARCAN (naloxone HCl) helps counter opioid overdose and it may save a life. We want to remind the public that we are all in this together and we are hopeful, for the sake of our children and the community more broadly, we can continue to work together to tackle this crisis.

For more information on the threat of fentanyl, visit: [Fentanyl Danger in Fresno County | County of Fresno](#)