

NAVIGATING THE FENTANYL CRISIS: A COMPREHENSIVE REPORT

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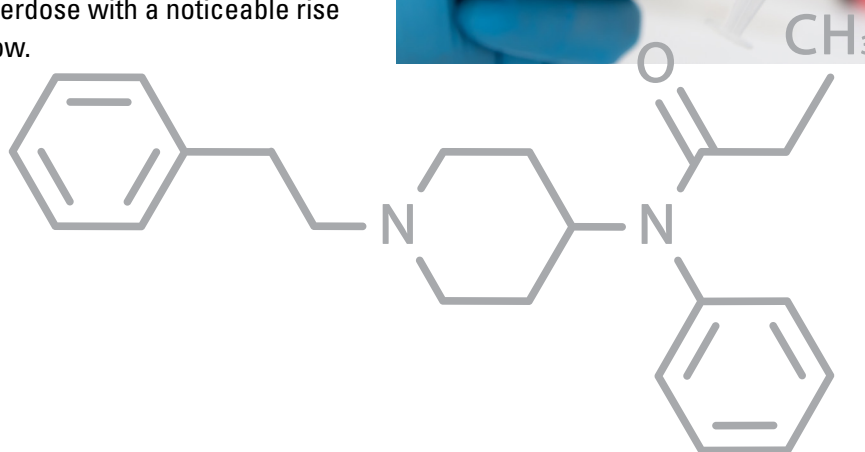
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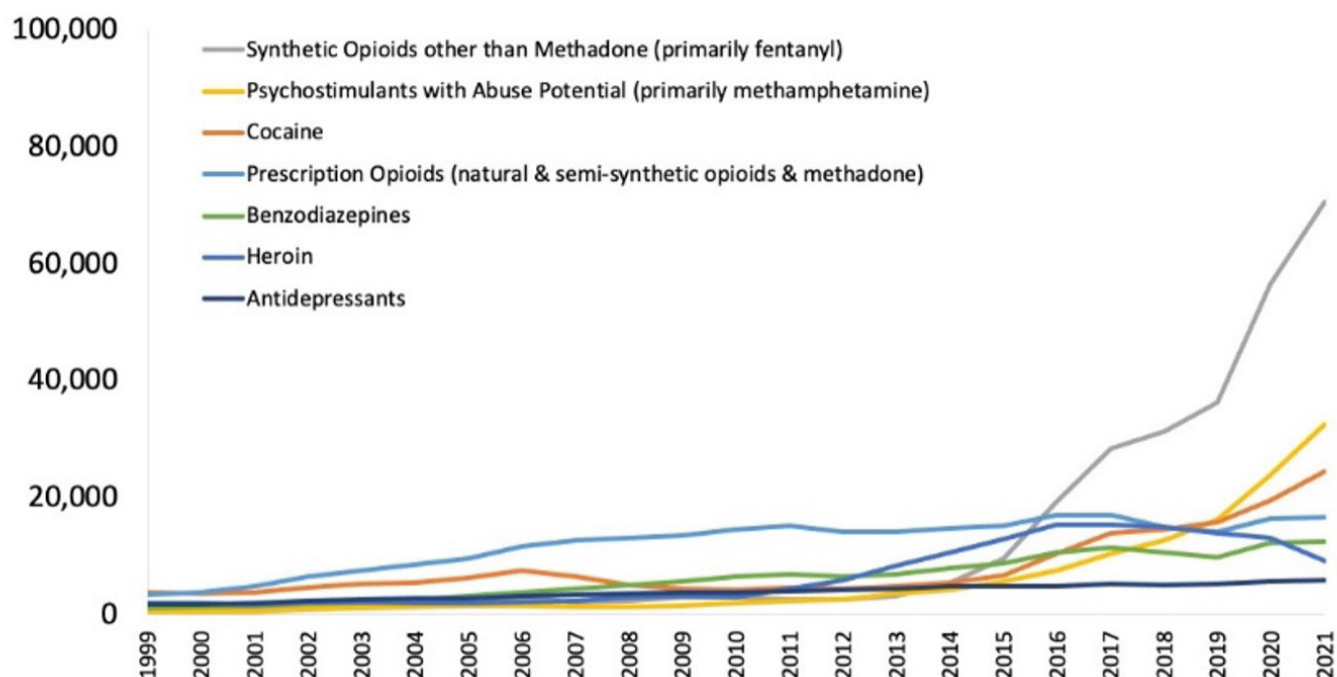
WHY IS FENTANYL AN ISSUE?

Fentanyl, a type of opioid, is a strong synthetic drug that is used to relieve pain that is legally obtained through a prescription from a licensed physician. It is an extremely potent substance that is 100 times stronger than morphine and 50 times stronger than heroin. Counterfeit drugs sold illegally are being laced with fentanyl (many times unbeknownst to the buyer) and can be found in forms of pills, nasal sprays, and candies.

According to the Centers for Disease and Control, there has been a sharp increase in fentanyl-related drug deaths in the United States since 2019 due to fentanyl overdose with a noticeable rise since 2014 as seen in the graph below.



NATIONAL DRUG-INVOLVED OVERDOSE DEATHS (2019-2021)



*Graph from the Center from Disease and Control

Unfortunately, a significant number of adolescents are falling victim to fentanyl-related deaths. According to the chart below, individuals between the ages of 5-14 and 15-24 have seen a large increase in number of deaths from 2020 to 2021.

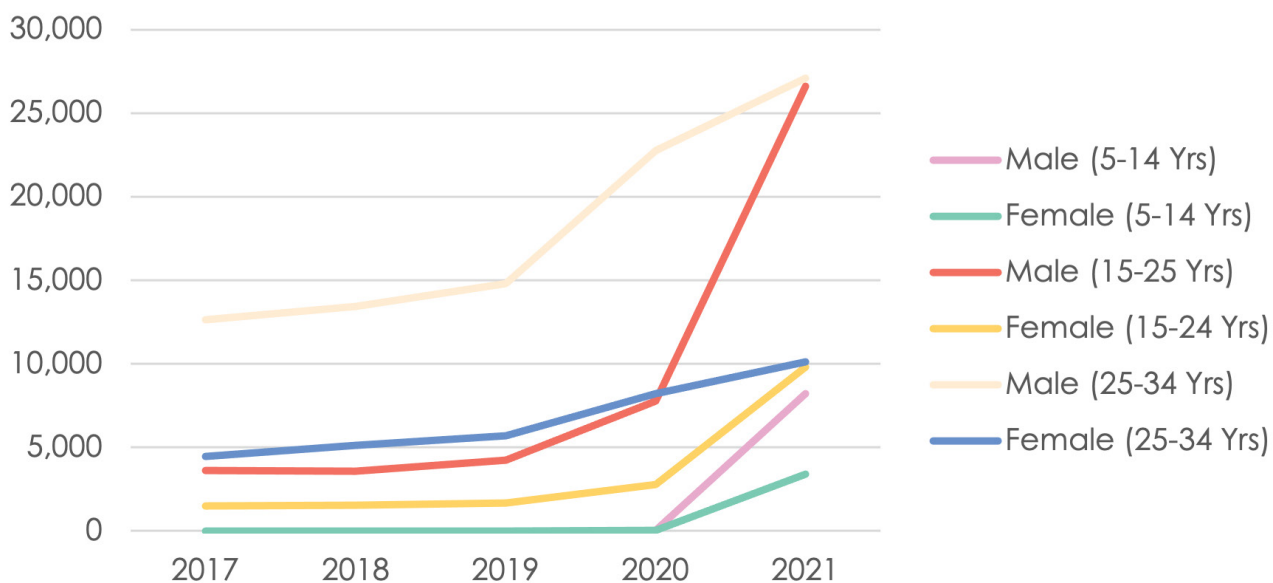
NUMBER OF DEATHS FROM FENTANYL IN U.S. BY AGE (5 – 34 YEARS)

YEAR	TOTAL NUMBER OF PEOPLE	5 – 14 YEARS OLD		15 – 24 YEARS OLD		25 – 34 YEARS OLD	
		# OF DEATHS	% OF TOTAL DEATHS	# OF DEATHS	% OF TOTAL DEATHS	# OF DEATHS	% OF TOTAL DEATHS
2021	137,926	11,628	8.4%	36,402	26.4%	37,226	27%
2020	109,996	79	0.1%	10,573	9.6%	30,970	28.2%
2019	70,084	28	0%	5,909	8.4%	20,496	29.2%
2018	60,253	15	0%	5,105	8.5%	18,546	30.8%
2017	54,677	22	0%	5,134	9.4%	17,070	31.2%

*Data collected from the National Safety Council

Additionally, from 2017-2021, males between the ages of 25 – 34 years old had higher numbers of deaths.

NUMBER OF DEATHS FROM FENTANYL BY AGE AND SEX



*Data collected from the National Safety Council

FENTANYL DEATH IN TEXAS

In Texas, an average of 5 deaths per day are due to fentanyl overdoses. The chart below illustrates the impact of synthetic opioids and all drug poisoning deaths. From 2020 to 2021, the number of deaths doubled. Notably, the majority of synthetic opioid-related fatalities are attributed to fentanyl. When looking at the overall deaths due to any type of drug, fentanyl is rapidly taking up the majority of causes.

NUMBER OF DEATHS FROM FENTANYL IN TEXAS

YEAR	# OF FENTANYL DEATHS	# OF DEATHS DUE TO SYNTHETIC OPIOIDS	% OF FENTANYL DEATHS DUE TO SYNTHETIC OPIOIDS	# OF DEATHS DUE TO DRUGS	% OF FENTANYL DEATHS DUE TO DRUGS
2022	2,197	2,276	96.53%	4,931	44.55%
2021	1,648	1,722	95.7%	4,480	36.79%
2020	891	981	90.83%	3,721	23.95%
2019	317	381	83.20%	2,764	11.47%
2018	213	304	70.07%	2,568	8.29%

*Data collected from the Texas Department of State Health Services

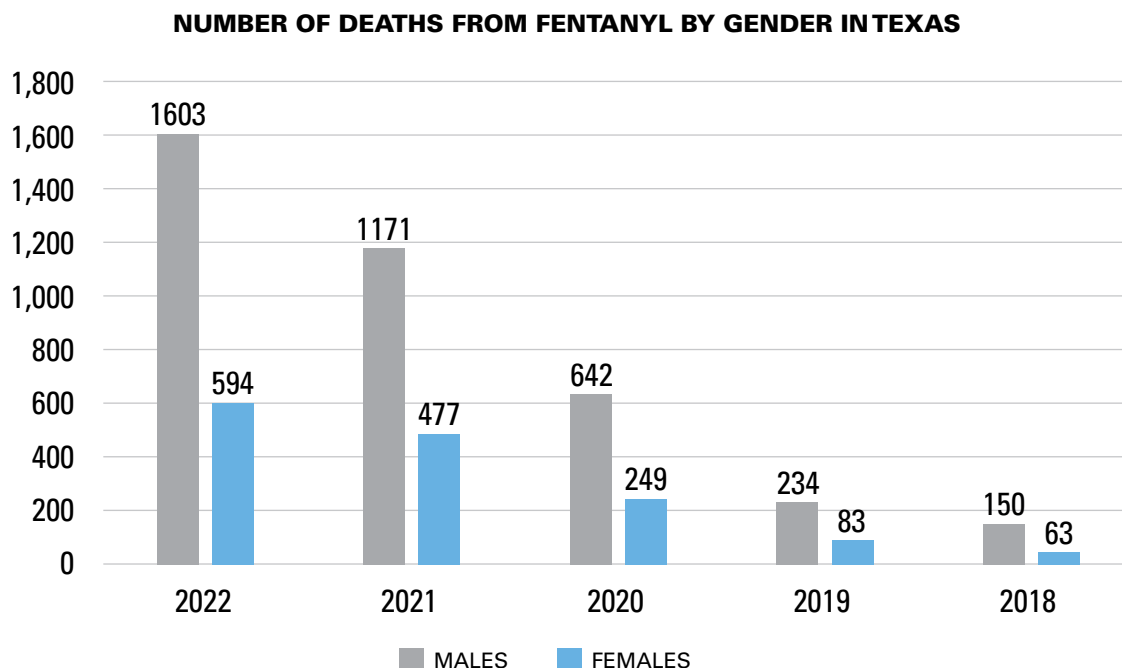
Additionally, in Texas, the highest number of deaths due to fentanyl is in the 25-34 year old age group. However, there has also been a significant rise in deaths in the 15-24 year old age group since 2018.

NUMBER OF DEATHS FROM FENTANYL BY AGE IN TEXAS

YEAR	15 – 24 YEARS OLD	25 – 34 YEARS OLD	35 – 44 YEARS OLD	45 – 54 YEARS OLD	55 – 64 YEARS OLD	65 – 74 YEARS OLD
2022	374	667	595	299	197	59
2021	327	546	435	222	131	37
2020	216	328	173	111	46	N/A
2019	40	106	76	50	34	N/A
2018	20	70	45	26	38	N/A

*Data collected from the Texas Department of State Health Services

According to the Texas Department of State Health Services, there are more male deaths due to fentanyl than females.



*Data collected from the Texas Department of State Health Services

SIGNS OF A FENTANYL OVERDOSE

Signs of fentanyl overdose include the following symptoms:

- Small pupils
- Little to no breathing
- Losing consciousness
- Choking, gurgling, or vomiting
- Limping
- Cold skin
- Discolored skin
- Blue or purple fingernails

When someone is overdosing, it is important to call 911 immediately. If possible, try to wake the person up and give them Naloxone, which is a Narcan (an over-the-counter medication that is used to reverse overdose effects due to opioids). Afterwards, attempt to give the person CPR and lay them on their side to avoid choking.

Naloxone can be ordered for free online in Texas at <https://naloxonetexas.com/>.



TEXAS RESPONSE TO THE FENTANYL CRISIS

The Texas Health and Human Services runs an active initiative called the Texas Targeted Opioid Response (TTOR) to save those who are affected by Opioid usage. They receive funding from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration and use those funds towards prevention, integrated treatment, and recovery services.

Additionally, it is important that schools find resources to educate students on the fentanyl crisis, as well as the dangers of using drugs. For example, people who use drugs may not realize that the drugs they use could unknowingly contain fentanyl, contributing to rise in fentanyl overdoses. School districts can also have Naloxone available on campus and train staff on how to use it in case of emergency.

CALL TO ACTION: HCDE INITIATIVES

The Center for Safe and Secure Schools (CSSS) at Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) has taken initiatives to bring attention to the fentanyl crisis by partnering with Harris County Public Health.

CSSS's Jeremy Foster, Officer of School Safety and Security, says, "CSSS has recently partnered with Harris County Public Health, collaborating closely with the Substance Use Prevention/Community Health and Wellness Division. In this joint effort, CSSS actively facilitates connections between various stakeholders, including ISD Police departments, emergency managers, and nurses. The vision is to expand these connections to HCDE's specialty schools in the future. Together, the focus is on developing comprehensive pamphlets that provide essential training in critical areas such as fentanyl awareness and training, distribution, and administration of Narcan, a life-saving medication, and crucial techniques for combating opioid overdoses in schools and communities."

CSSS is also partnering with Alief ISD and The Alief HOPE clinic where they are extending their reach to the broader community, ensuring widespread access to invaluable education and resources.

To ensure streamlined access to Narcan, CSSS leverages the online platform www.morenarcanplease.com, facilitating the procurement and distribution of this vital medication. Notably, CSSS's support extends to Harris County Precinct 5 officers, equipping them with Narcan to address the potential risks associated with fentanyl exposure, which can prove lethal upon skin contact.

CSSS remains dedicated to delivering thorough awareness training within ISDs on pressing issues like fentanyl, vaping, and drug addiction. These initiatives underscore CSSS unwavering dedication to community health and safety, fostering collaborative efforts that effectively address critical public health concerns.

More information on HCDE's Center for Safe and Secure schools can be found at <https://www.hcde-texas.org/CSSS>.



The Center for
Safe and Secure Schools
Harris County Department of Education



REFERENCES

<https://healthdata.dshs.texas.gov/dashboard/drugs-and-alcohol/fentanyl-trends/>

<https://injuryfacts.nsc.org/home-and-community/safety-topics/drugoverdoses/data-details/>

<https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugfacts/fentanyl>

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<https://www.cdc.gov/stopoverdose/fentanyl/index.html>

<https://www.cdc.gov/stopoverdose/fentanyl/index.html#:~:text=Illegally%20made%20fentanyl,-Illegally%20made%20fentanyl&text=Fentanyl%20placed%20drugs%20are%20extremely,onto%20paper%20or%20small%20candies.>

<https://www.hhs.texas.gov/services/mental-health-substance-use/mental-health-substance-use-resources/fentanyl-one-pill-kills>



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The Harris County Department of Education (HCDE) is dedicated to providing high-quality, cost-effective educational services to school districts, educators, government and non-profit organizations in Harris County.

Through schools for students with profound special needs, Head Start early childhood education, school-based therapy services and afterschool programs, HCDE supports all area school districts in meeting the needs of uniquely challenged learners while saving them millions of dollars each year through shared services. The Department is an innovative leader of literacy and workforce development programming for adult learners across the county. HCDE also provides various other educational support services including professional development for educators, school safety programs, educator certification, records management, and a national purchasing cooperative.

HCDE impacts an average of 150,000 students and educators each year. Using fees for service, grants, and the purchasing cooperative, HCDE turns one dollar of property taxes into five dollars of services.

HCDE is separate and distinct from other agencies of Harris County. The Department's primary service area covers 1,788 square miles but also provides support to school districts, education service centers and other governmental agencies across Texas and the nation.

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