

August 23, 2022 Email to Hays CISD Parents, Students, & Staff

Urgent Matter for Hays CISD – Student Fentanyl Deaths

Dear Hays CISD Family,

I have some devastating news to share with you. Last weekend, we lost another student to a suspected fentanyl overdose. This would make the third such overdose death of a Hays CISD student in the past month. We are also aware of about a half-dozen cases where Hays CISD students, as young as middle school-aged children, have experienced life-threatening overdoses since the end of last school year and during the summer. The three deaths have all happened off-campus, but involve students from Lehman and Johnson High Schools. One of the students was 15-years-old and two of them were 17-years-old. The overdose cases have happened both on and off campus and affect all three of our comprehensive high schools – Hays, Johnson, and Lehman.

We have created a special webpage for information related to fentanyl and Hays CISD:

www.hayscisid.net/fentanyl.

Quite often, in cases involving fentanyl, people who take the drug have no idea they are taking it. Illicitly manufactured fentanyl is often the ingredient used in counterfeit pills purchased on the street – sold as something else like Xanax, Percocet, or oxycodone. In the drug trade, fentanyl is a cheap alternative to other synthetic opioids and it takes so very little to kill. (Read the U.S. Drug Enforcement Agency fact sheet on counterfeit pills: <https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2021-05/Counterfeit%20Pills%20fact%20SHEET-5-13-21-FINAL.pdf>)

Last week, in our night-before-school email, we shared with you information from the Kyle Police Department showing a photo of one of the most prevalent types of fentanyl-laced pills that is currently in our area – counterfeit oxycodone M30 tablets in blue. (Read the Kyle PD Facebook post and see photos: <https://www.facebook.com/kyletxpd/posts/pfbid0EnJkFYamfZvg1r7bmv5dNg5HTCbziWNwXMAB7KYE7QHjtF5nX1CuDtUUA7gA54fYI>)

Another concerning development is growing reports of what is being called, “rainbow fentanyl,” though we are not aware that these pills have been discovered in our area yet. They are colorful and might be confused by younger children as candy. A quick Google search for, “rainbow fentanyl,” will take you to any number of news stories and websites about this concerning trend.

What We Are Doing

I want you to know that we are partnering with law enforcement agencies in our area, including the Kyle Police Department, to help educate parents and students about the dangers of fentanyl in our communities. I especially want to commend Kyle Police Chief Jeff Barnett for his attention to this issue. Our law enforcement partners are working hard on the front lines to fight the flow of fentanyl on the streets in our area.

Additionally, we have stocked Narcan at all of our campuses – through the nurses’ offices and through our school resource officers (SROs) from the Hays County Sheriff’s Office. Narcan, administered quickly enough, can help reverse the effects of a fentanyl overdose.

Our nursing staff, counselors, safety and security team, curriculum and instruction leaders, and our principals and campus leaders will be working on in-school educational opportunities, which may include assemblies, homeroom discussions, or other ways to inform students, about fentanyl dangers.

What You Can Do

Talk to your children. Tell them that ANY pill they get from a friend or purchased online or off of the street could be a counterfeit pill containing fentanyl. Only take medication that was prescribed by a doctor, purchased at a pharmacy, and approved by parents or guardians.

Learn about the fentanyl crisis and help spread the word that this is a dangerous situation. (Visit the Centers for Disease Control website's Fentanyl Facts page as a starting-point: <https://www.cdc.gov/stopoverdose/fentanyl/index.html>)

Ensure that your child delivers all medications, including over-the-counter medications, to the school nurse for distribution. Students should not carry any medications with them at school, nor share them for any reason.

Reach out to your school nurse or counselor with any specific concerns, or if you need additional resources that are unique to your family.

Real and Present Danger

I'm worried. We take all safety and security issues very seriously, but this one is especially concerning. So far – and I am deeply grateful – we haven't lost a single student to COVID or gun violence on our campuses. Both of these issues have rightfully been pressing matters the past couple of years. We must treat the fentanyl crisis with the same urgency.

Sincerely,
Eric