

Press Release

July 21, 2025

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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SAFE Glen Cove Coalition: HALT Fentanyl Act Signed into Law

This week, President Trump signed the Halt All Lethal Trafficking of Fentanyl Act, also called the HALT Fentanyl Act into law. This important legislation permanently designates all fentanyl-related substances as Schedule I drugs, the most restrictive classification in the Controlled Substances Act and applies to substances that have a high potential for misuse, have no currently accepted medical value, and are subject to regulatory controls as well as administrative, civil and criminal penalties under the Controlled Substances Act.

Fentanyl and other illegally produced synthetic opioids (entirely made in laboratories) have played a major role in the overdose crisis in the United States since 2013. Since 2017, overdose deaths often involve use of multiple drugs. In many cases, fentanyl is one of these drugs. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), when fentanyl is mixed with other drugs, either on purpose or unknowingly, the combination can have more serious health effects. Consequently, overdose deaths involving fentanyl among adolescents have risen in recent years, even though teens don't report taking more illegal drugs. This rise may be linked to their use of counterfeit medicines for anxiety and ADHD that had fentanyl mixed in. Teens may not know the medicines could contain fentanyl and might not realize the pills are dangerous.

Opioids are a class of drugs that include both prescription medicines such as morphine and illegal drugs like heroin. Because it is synthetic it has no natural ingredients. It was developed as a prescription medicine for treating severe pain, such as pain after surgery. When used as prescribed, it is also very effective in treating cancer pain or other types of severe chronic pain that don't respond to other pain medicines.

According to the US Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA), Fentanyl is also made and used illegally, because it is very powerful and relatively easy to produce. Illegally made fentanyl is now a main driver of the overdose and addiction crisis in the United States.

Like other opioids, fentanyl can ease pain and make a person feel happy and relaxed. These effects can lead to other changes in mood and thinking, such as wanting to take more of the drug and having a hard time concentrating or making decisions. Fentanyl is much more powerful than morphine or heroin, and its effects can start more quickly. Even a small dose of fentanyl can cause a fatal overdose. Fentanyl is much more potent than other opioids like morphine or heroin. As little as 2 mg of fentanyl—the amount of a few grains of salt—can be fatal.

The DEA has seized counterfeit pills that contain fentanyl. These pills are made to look like prescription pain medicines or medicines to treat anxiety or attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and are often sold through social media or internet sites. These fake pills may look exactly like the real thing but can also contain fentanyl, often in deadly doses. Individuals taking these pills often do not know they are taking fentanyl hence the introduction of Fentanyl Test Strips as a harm reduction effort. You cannot tell if another drug or pill contains fentanyl by looking, tasting, or smelling it. The only way to check if a drug or pill contains fentanyl is by using fentanyl test strips which are small strips of paper, similar to what's in a pregnancy test. The strips can check for fentanyl in different kinds of drugs and pills.

Fentanyl, like other opioids, is addictive, especially when not used as prescribed by a health professional. Because fentanyl is so powerful, people can quickly lose control over their use. Fentanyl causes changes in brain activity that can eventually motivate people to continue using it even when they experience harmful effects. Repeated fentanyl use can lead to dependence, which means that the person's body gets used to the presence of the drug. They are only able to feel normal when they take the drug. Dependence can cause extremely unpleasant withdrawal symptoms if the person stops using it.

The HALT Fentanyl Act will be beneficial by not only permanently classifying Fentanyl-Related Substances (FRS) as Schedule I drugs, subjecting fentanyl analogues to the strictest federal regulations and penalties but increasing penalties for fentanyl trafficking through mandatory minimum sentences. The Act will also facilitate research on Schedule I substances by streamlining the research process for government-funded or FDA-exempt studies and close loopholes for traffickers to evade prosecution by altering chemical compounds.

SAFE, Inc. is the only alcohol and substance abuse prevention, intervention and education agency in the City of Glen Cove. Its Coalition is conducting an opioid prevention awareness campaign entitled, "Keeping Glen Cove SAFE," to educate and update the community regarding opioid use and its consequences. To learn more about the SAFE Glen Cove Coalition please follow us on www.facebook.com/safeglencovecoalition or visit SAFE's website to learn more about the Opioid Epidemic at www.safeglencove.org.