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## **Town Hall on Educating Youth & Families on Dangers of Fentanyl** *Increasing Local Opioid Overdose Rates Sound the Alarm*

Stockton, CA—On Monday, October 3, 2022, 5:30 thru 8:00 p.m., the San Joaquin County Opioid Safety Coalition (SJCOSC), San Joaquin County Office of Education (SJCOE) and San Joaquin County Public Health Services (SJCPHS) are hosting a virtual and in-person fentanyl awareness town hall at SJCOE's Wentworth Education Center on 2707 Transworld Drive, Stockton, to provide information and resources on the fentanyl crisis afflicting our communities. The primary focus of the event is to educate youth ages 14 to 25 and their families on the dangers of [fentanyl](#). The event will end with distribution of naloxone, the opioid overdose reversal drug, to the participants

"Fentanyl is one of the most critical issues impacting our community," said District Attorney Tori Verber Salazar. "The San Joaquin County District Attorney's Office is committed to combatting the fentanyl crisis with our fellow law enforcement agencies through education, awareness, prevention, and prosecution of those who distribute this lethal opioid in our county."

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is 50 to 100 times stronger than morphine. Typically, it is used to treat severe pain, such as for advanced cancer. However, illegally manufactured fentanyl that is mixed with other illicit drugs such as heroin, cocaine, and fake prescription pills, sometimes with or without a user's knowledge, to increase the euphoric effects, has been linked to fentanyl-related overdoses.

"The youth are our future, and it is our responsibility to protect their future," said City of Stockton Mayor Kevin Lincoln. "It is critical that we understand the risks our young people face when it comes to opioid exposure so that we can do our part to keep Stockton youth and young adults safe."

Data from the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) [Opioid Surveillance Dashboard indicate](#) that San Joaquin county has seen a thirty-fold increase in the rate of fentanyl-related overdose deaths in a little over two years (0.37 per 100,000 residents in 2019 vs.13.13 per 100,000 in 2021), and the rate continues to climb. As a result, people who use and experiment with illicit drugs, such as our youth, are now much more at risk of fentanyl overdose and death.

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"Even in small doses, fentanyl can be lethal," said San Joaquin County Superintendent of Schools Dr. Troy A. Brown. "Too many San Joaquin County residents, including teens, have suffered from fentanyl overdoses. A broad-based coalition is working together to lessen the impact of fentanyl in our county. And everyone in our community can make a difference by getting informed and talking to their children and loved ones about the dangers of fentanyl and drug use."

At the town hall, guest speakers will describe actions being taken to prevent and curb this crisis. Data will be presented regarding the realities of fentanyl as well as training for parents on how to provide answers to youth. Moreover, a demonstration on the use of naloxone will be performed.

"The age range of more than half the deaths related to fentanyl in our county since 2019 has been between 14 to 35, which is alarming," said San Joaquin Public Health Officer Dr. Maggie Park. "Therefore, we need to educate the public, especially our children, on the abuse of illicitly produced fentanyl and fentanyl analogues. Fortunately, today's townhall provides an opportune platform for education, prevention and action, which we all should take advantage of and support."

At the town hall, local providers and organizations will have resource tables to share fentanyl-related information and materials. A mobile food truck will provide participants with a free meal. An RSVP is strongly recommended and can be done at <https://bit.ly/FentanylTownHall>. The town hall will also be livestreamed at <https://bit.ly/SJCOEYouTubeChannel>. To learn more about SJCOSC, the free naloxone distribution program, and other local opioid resources, visit [www.SJCopioidsafety.org](http://www.SJCopioidsafety.org), or call (209) 953-7309.

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