SCHOOLS TOOLKIT · FOR TEACHERS

Your students listen to you.

How to talk about fentanyl in class, notice warning signs, and connect students to help. You don't need to be an expert.

10	76%	1 in 4	2 mg
High school students die from fentanyl in an average week.[1]	Of teen overdose deaths in 2023 involved fentanyl.[2]	Teen overdose deaths showed signs of fake pills.[3]	A potentially deadly dose of fentanyl. About what fits on the tip of a pencil.[4]

TALKING WITH STUDENTS

Is it my place to talk about fentanyl?

Yes. Share facts, listen, and connect students with help. Follow your school's policies, and bring in your counselor or nurse.

How do I open a discussion?

Ask: "What have you heard about fake pills?" or "What would you do if a friend wouldn't wake up?" Let them talk, then correct myths with facts.

Why do teens take pills?

Often to cope with stress, anxiety, sleep or pain, not to party. About 4 in 10 teens who died had signs of a mental health condition or treatment.[3]

What should every student hear?

Any pill that didn't come from a pharmacy can contain fentanyl. You can't see, smell or taste it. Dealers find teens online. Calling 911 is always right.[4]

What should I avoid?

Scare tactics, graphic images, and words like "addict" that shame people. Assume someone in the room has lost someone.[5]

THE BOTTOM LINE

Facts, not fear. A student who knows how to help a friend can save a life.

NOTICING CONCERNS AND GETTING HELP

What signs might I notice?

Sudden changes in grades, attendance, mood, friends or looks. Falling asleep in class. Talk about pills. These have many causes, so share concern, don't accuse.[6]

What if a student tells me about drug use?

Stay calm and thank them. Don't promise to keep it secret if someone could be in danger. Walk them to the counselor. If someone is in danger now, call 911.

What if there's an overdose in my room?

Call 911, send for the nurse and naloxone, and follow your school's plan. Learn where naloxone is kept before you ever need it.

What if I'm worried about a student?

Follow your school's referral process. Talk with the counselor, nurse or an administrator. Write down what you saw. Never confront a student in front of others.

What if a student is grieving?

Acknowledge the loss. Say the person's name if the student does. Be flexible with work. Refer them to counseling, and check in again weeks later.

A 15-MINUTE CLASS DISCUSSION

1. **Set ground rules**
   Respect, no names, and it's okay to pass.
2. **Ask what they know**
   "What have you heard about fake pills?"
3. **Share the facts**
   Hand out the Students sheet and read it together.
4. **Practice helping**
   Call 911, give naloxone, stay.
5. **Close with support**
   Name who they can talk to at school, and share 988.

GET HELP

EMERGENCY
911

POISON HELP
1-800-222-1222

SAMHSA HELPLINE
1-800-662-4357

FIND TREATMENT
FindTreatment.gov

988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE
Call or text 988

Fentanyl Families Network
For families who have lost a loved one. Scan to join.

About us. United Against Fentanyl is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that interrupts the use of illicit fentanyl through innovative, bold, and effective initiatives. Learn more at unitedagainstfentanyl.org.

SOURCES

1. CDC mortality data, as cited in United Against Fentanyl's organizational summary (2025).
2. KFF, "Teens, Drugs, and Overdose: Contrasting Pre-Pandemic and Current Trends," analysis of CDC WONDER data, 2023 deaths.
3. Tanz LJ, et al. Drug Overdose Deaths Among Persons Aged 10 to 19 Years, United States, July 2019 to December 2021. MMWR 2022;71(50):1576 to 1582.
4. U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration, fake pill public awareness campaign, dea.gov/onepill.
5. National Institute on Drug Abuse, Words Matter: Terms to Use and Avoid When Talking About Addiction.
6. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Overdose Prevention and Response Toolkit, 2023; CDC, Stop Overdose.

For education only. Not medical or legal advice. In an emergency, call 911. Updated November 2026.