

## **Notice to Parents and Guardians Regarding Synthetic Drugs**

### **Understanding Synthetic Drugs: A Growing Concern**

A synthetic drug is a drug with properties and effects similar to a known hallucinogen or narcotic but having a slightly altered chemical structure, especially such a drug created in order to evade existing restrictions against illegal substances. Synthetic drugs include but are not limited to synthetic cannabinoids (“synthetic marijuana,” “spice,” “k2”), methamphetamines, bath salts, and fentanyl.

The California Department of Public Health (“CDPH”), has expounded on the extreme danger of drugs laced with fentanyl. Illicit fentanyl can be added to other drugs to make them cheaper, more powerful, and more addictive. Illicit fentanyl has been found in many drugs, including heroin, methamphetamine, counterfeit pills, and cocaine. Fentanyl mixed with any drug increases the likelihood of a fatal overdose. Furthermore, it is nearly impossible to tell if drugs have been laced with fentanyl without additional testing, because fentanyl cannot be seen, smelled, or tasted when used as a lacing agent.

### **The Risks and Consequences**

The health risks associated with synthetic drugs include cardiovascular problems, respiratory failure, hallucinations, seizures, and, in extreme cases, death. Additionally, the unpredictable effects of these substances make them particularly dangerous. Individuals using synthetic drugs may develop a dependence, leading to addiction and a range of associated challenges.

Academic performance can also suffer due to impaired cognitive function.

### **Empowering Parents: How to Protect Your Child**

#### *Open Communication*

Communication is a cornerstone of building a solid and trusting relationship with your child. Create an open, non-judgmental space where they feel comfortable discussing their thoughts and experiences. Initiate conversations about the specific dangers associated with synthetic drugs, sharing information in a manner that fosters understanding rather than fear. Encouraging open dialogue empowers your child to express their concerns and seek guidance when needed.

#### *Education*

Staying informed about the ever-evolving landscape of drug trends is crucial for parents. Educate yourself about synthetic drugs, including their chemical composition, potential effects, and prevalence. This knowledge equips you to have informed discussions with your child. When educating your child, focus on providing accurate and age-appropriate information. Highlight the specific risks associated with synthetic drugs, emphasizing the importance of making informed choices.

### *Monitoring*

As a parent, staying vigilant and observant can be instrumental in identifying potential signs of substance use. Pay attention to changes in your child's behavior, such as sudden mood swings, withdrawal from friends and family, or alterations in sleep patterns. Academic performance can also be indicative of underlying issues. Regularly engage with teachers and school staff to stay informed about your child's progress. Maintaining awareness increases the likelihood of early intervention and support if any issues arise.

It is important to recognize the SIGNS OF AN OPIOID OVERDOSE, CALL 911 if you see someone who is:

- Unable to wake up or respond to you.
- Breathing slowly or not at all.
- Making gurgling, choking, or snoring sounds

### *Seek Professional Help*

If you have concerns about your child's involvement with synthetic drugs, seeking professional help is crucial. Contact healthcare professionals, such as your family doctor or a pediatrician, who can provide guidance and conduct necessary assessments. Early intervention significantly improves the chances of successful resolution and recovery.

For additional information or assistance, please contact our office or visit the [California Department of Public Health's Substance and Addiction Prevention Branch](#).