

Vaping, Fentanyl, and Opioid Addiction: The Threats to Students

Earlier this year, in March, a Seattle school district sent students and their parents an email that warned them about the dangers of fentanyl vaping.

According to the letter, the school received reports that several students bought vape cartridges from at least one fellow student. After vaping with those cartridges, some of the students became sick. They believe that the cartridges may have contained illegal substances, including Fentanyl.

The incident happened inside Woodinville high school. In the past five years, there has been a spike in the growing number of deadly fentanyl overdoses.

The district states the students' safety is its top priority, and that the incident is being thoroughly investigated by police. Gwen Baumgardner "[Vape cartridges sold at local school might have been tainted with fentanyl!](#)" (May 17, 2022).

Commentary and Checklist

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), "Fentanyl is a powerful synthetic opioid that is similar to morphine but is 50 to 100 times more potent." It is a prescription drug used to treat patients experiencing severe pain, especially after surgery.

Sometimes, it is used to treat patients with chronic pain who are physically tolerant to other opioids. A patient becomes tolerant when they need a higher and/or more frequent amount of a drug to get the desired effects.

Fentanyl, like other opioid drugs such as heroin and morphine, works by binding to the body's opioid receptors, which are found in areas of the brain that control pain and emotions.

If a patient has taken opioids many times, the brain adapts to the drug, diminishing its sensitivity, making it hard for the patient to feel pleasure from anything besides the drug. When a patient becomes addicted, drug- seeking and drug use take over their lives.

What can schools do to help curb illegal drug sales and use on campus?

- **Prevention:** This includes having written policies and procedures aimed at stopping drug sales and use activity on campus.
- **Education:** Everyone in the school community, including parents, students, and neighbors, can be invited to participate in drug education training and prevention.
- **Vigilance:** Everyone should be aware for the signs of illegal drug use or sales. Make sure you have reporting mechanisms in place, including anonymous ones, that everyone can use.
- **Enforcement:** When violations of your policies occur, follow through with discipline appropriate to the situation.