



Distribution of Fentanyl Test Strips Policy

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Policy It is the policy of the Department of Behavioral Health (DBH), Substance Use Disorder and Recovery Services (SUDRS), to distribute Fentanyl Test Strips (FTS) directly to individuals determined to be at risk for opioid use and opioid overdose. FTS are to be distributed by program staff at clinics, field, and outreach events to clients/consumers recognized as having the potential to be at risk of exposure to substances that may contain Fentanyl either intentionally or via contamination.

Purpose To provide guidance regarding DBH’s Fentanyl Test Strip distribution project, which allows SUDRS Alcohol and Other Drug (AOD) Counselors, medical staff and clinical staff, to distribute Fentanyl Test Strips directly to Substance Use Disorder (SUD) clients or other eligible persons who are determined to benefit from the Fentanyl Test Strips. Fentanyl Test Strips are used to detect fentanyl in illicit drugs, and may help inform SUD clients about the risk of fentanyl exposure prior to ingestion.

Definition(s)

Harm Reduction: An approach that emphasizes engaging directly with people who use drugs to prevent overdose and infectious disease transmission; improve the physical, mental, and social wellbeing of those served; and offer low-threshold options for accessing substance use disorder treatment and other health care services.

Fentanyl: A powerful synthetic opioid similar to morphine, but 50 to 100 times more potent. It is a prescription drug that is also made and used illegal, outside of legitimate medical practice. Similar to morphine, it is typically used to treat patients with severe pain, especially during surgery or in the later stages of cancer.

Fentanyl Test Strips (FTS): A form of inexpensive drug testing technology that was originally developed for urinalysis, but has been shown to be effective at detecting the presence of fentanyl and fentanyl analogs in drug samples prior to ingestion. FTS can be used in non-opioid unregulated drug products to determine the presence of fentanyl or fentanyl analogues as contaminants. They can be used to test injectable drugs, powders, pills and cannabis products.

Opioids: Include prescription medications used to treat pain such as morphine, codeine, methadone, oxycodone, hydrocodone, fentanyl, hydromorphone, and buprenorphine, as well as illegal drugs such as heroin and illicit synthetic opioids such as fentanyl analogs (e.g., carfentanil).

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Background

The United States is experiencing an unprecedented increase in opioid overdoses driven by the proliferation of highly potent synthetic opioids containing primarily fentanyl and other analogues. Fentanyl, and other synthetic opioids, are the most common drugs related to overdose deaths in 2021 per the California Department of Public Health Opioid Dashboard. Despite the use of small doses, fentanyl can be lethal, as it has a stronger potency. Drugs can contain lethal levels of fentanyl that cannot be seen, tasted or smelled; fentanyl is nearly impossible to detect unless tested.

- **Harm reduction** incorporates strategies that meet people “where they are” on their own terms, and may serve as a pathway to additional prevention, treatment, and recovery services. Harm reduction plays a significant role in preventing drug-related deaths by being available and accessible in a manner that emphasizes the need for humility and compassion toward those with a SUD. The use of FTS represents an evidence practice, which has reliably demonstrated reductions in high-risk behaviors. FTS can be used to determine if other drugs have been contaminated with fentanyl. Testing allows individuals to take appropriate actions to reduce the risk of overdose.
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Guidelines and Requirements

- Clinic and field staff will assess individuals to determine risk for potential opioid overdose under the authority of the clinic or program supervisor.
 - Staff will distribute Fentanyl Test Strips and update the Non-Medication Resource log (MDS032).
 - Fentanyl test strips should be re-ordered at the direction of program managers when supplies are estimated to be exhausted within 30 days.
 - FTS will have an attached label with instructions for one-time use.
 - Staff will track the date, amount and where the FTS were distributed.
 - The Non-Medication Resource log (MDS032) is to track distribution only and will not require recipient information.
 - Fentanyl Test Strips should be stored in a location with access limited to designated staff. Fentanyl test strips should be stored at temperatures between 36-86°F per manufacturer’s guidelines.
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Related Policies and Procedure(s)

[DBH Standard Practice Manual and Departmental Forms:](#)

- [Narcan Distribution Project Policy \(MDS2032\)](#)
 - [Narcan Distribution Project Procedure \(MDS2032-1\)](#)
 - [Fentanyl Test Strip Procedure \(SUDRS 0243-1\)](#)
 - [Non-Medication Resource log \(MDS032\)](#)
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Reference(s)

- [Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration \(SAMHSA\)](#)
- [Center for Disease Control and Prevention \(CDC\)](#)
- [California Department of Public Health- Fentanyl Testing Fact Sheet](#)
- [California Department of Public Health Opioid Dashboard](#)