

## PRESS RELEASE

### FENTANYL IS A SERIAL KILLER: NATIONAL FENTANYL AWARENESS AND PREVENTION DAY RISE UP RALLY AT THE CAPITOL: FORGOTTEN VICTIMS OF NORTH CAROLINA

Date & Time: Sunday, August 21, 2022, 2-4pm, Rain or Shine

Where: NC State Capitol Building Grounds, South Side, Morgan Street facing Fayetteville Street

Parking: Free street parking and paid parking in municipal lots

Rules: No signs on sticks/poles, no drones, no firearms/weapons, no climbing trees/walls/statues

Attendees: Fentanyl Victim's Families, Media, Elected Officials, Law Enforcement, Recovery Providers, Educators, Advocates, and the Public

**Organized by:** Patricia Drewes, Co-Founder,

Forgotten Victims of Vance, Granville, Franklin, and Warren Counties, NC

Author: Death of America's Future: China's Fentanyl

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**"Fentanyl is the single deadliest drug threat our nation has ever faced," states Anne Milgram, Administrator, US Drug Enforcement Agency. "Fentanyl is everywhere. No community is safe from this poison."**

### **FENTANYL IS A SERIAL KILLER: FENTANYL FACTS IN NORTH CAROLINA**

1. 8 North Carolinians die each day from fentanyl
2. North Carolina is #6 in the nation in fentanyl deaths
3. Fentanyl is the leading cause of death in NC and the US for 18–35-year-olds. Fentanyl is killing America's youth
4. 76% all NC medicine/drug toxicity deaths involved fentanyl <sup>^\*</sup>

### **GOALS**

1. EDUCATE the public, SUPPORT victim's families, ASSIST those with substance use disorder, INVESTIGATE & PROSECUTE fentanyl dealers/suppliers, STOP fentanyl from arriving in NC, CHANGE terminology, SAVE LIVES
2. NC should have a statewide investigation protocol for suspicious deaths involving fentanyl since the deaths occur in all 100 counties, yet it does not per *NC Sheriff's Association Legal Counsel*. 38/100 Sheriff's Offices investigated and filed fentanyl involved homicide charges in 2020-21
3. Law Enforcement (LE) should immediately investigate all suspicious drug deaths. Do not wait for toxicology results. State toxicology results take 120-180 days (4-6 months) to be finalized by the NC Office of Chief Medical Examiner. Families & LE do not officially learn what chemical(s) killed their loved one for up to 6 months. By then it is difficult to investigate, & more die.
4. NC District Attorneys should uniformly apply state laws to prosecute fentanyl involved homicides, yet they do not. 4,992 fentanyl involved deaths occurred in 2020-21 yet NC DAs prosecuted only 139 cases; 6 of the 42 NC DAs prosecuted ZERO cases.
5. Fentanyl Awareness Speakers should be permitted in all NC Middle & High Schools to address the dangers of fentanyl.
6. Naloxone (Narcan) should be in every NC school, currently it is not.
7. All NC Law Enforcement should be equipped with Naloxone, currently they are not.

### **FENTANYL STATISTICS NORTH CAROLINA, source: NC Office of Chief Medical Examiner**

<b>Year</b>	<b># of fentanyl positive deaths<sup>^</sup></b>	<b>% Increase from previous year</b>
2016	442	1 <sup>st</sup> year of records
2017	936	112% increase
2018	1,229	31% increase
2019	1,490	21% increase
2020	2,426	63% increase
2021 <sup>^*</sup>	3,163	30% increase
2022 <sup>^*</sup>	2,414 Jan-July 2022 <sup>*</sup>	7% increase same time period 2021

For detailed case definitions see: <https://www.injuryfreenc.ncdhhs.gov/DataSurveillance/poisoning/SummaryTableforPoisoningDefinitions.pdf>

Data source: North Carolina State Center for Health Statistics, Vital Statistics Death Certificate Data (2020-2021\*)

Analysis by: North Carolina Division of Public Health Injury and Violence Prevention Branch Epidemiology, Surveillance & Informatics Unit

\*2021 and 2022 data are provisional and subject to change

<sup>^</sup>There is no individual code for fentanyl involvement on a death certificate; instead, the code T40.4 - an overdose involving another synthetic narcotic is used as a proxy for fentanyl-involvement. Fentanyl gets coded using the 'other' synthetic narcotic code, but there may be other drugs included in this category, however, we know from toxicology data that the majority of deaths receiving this code involved fentanyl

*Newly Formed! Launching Soon! Non-Profit Paperwork Filed!*

## **Fentanyl Victims Network of North Carolina**

Barbara Walsh: Executive Director, Community Organizer, Mom of Fentanyl Victim, Sophia Walsh, Forever 24  
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### **GOALS**

#### Educate the public:

Fentanyl awareness speakers and curriculum should be in all NC Public High and Middle Schools. Utilize fentanyl victim families as guest speakers in all 100 counties. FOCUS ON LOCAL

#### Support fentanyl victim families:

NC Courts Victim Services does not deploy until someone is charged for their loved one's death, yet investigations and charges seldom occur. Families must push down their grief to become their own investigator. This includes hiring attorneys, private detectives, cell phone unlocking services and analysis, etc. All of this takes money! Build Fentanyl Victims Network of North Carolina a 100-county grassroots advocacy network and clearinghouse for fentanyl victim families to access common information and resources with links to local existing NC fentanyl victim non-profits and programs.

#### Naloxone access for everyone, not just the few:

Think about naloxone as a household fire extinguisher or HS athletic department defibrillator. Naloxone should be in schools, homes, backpacks and with every 1st responder and law enforcement personnel. Shift NC Departments of Public Health COVID response teams to Fentanyl response teams by utilizing lessons learned, technology/dashboards, communication lists, etc.

#### Change the Terminology & Reduce Stigma:

Utilize and educate the media just like it's been done for race, equity, gender, addiction, mental health and who you can love. It is fentanyl toxicity or poisoning, not overdose. It is death by deception, not by choice. No pill is safe unless it's from a pharmacy. Experimentation is no longer safe. Snapchat orders are deadly. Fentanyl is an epidemic within the Opioid Epidemic.

#### Utilize COVID dashboard tools to create the same for Fentanyl safety and awareness.

Fentanyl death dashboard by zip code would be terrific! Where and how to get naloxone in every county, etc. Dashboard accessible to public & law enforcement. Utilize local NC Departments of Public Health.

#### Shorten NC OCME toxicology result processing time:

5-8 months is too long for families and law enforcement to learn what killed the victim making it difficult to investigate and prevents local public awareness of fentanyl in their community. Identify bottlenecks, solutions, and funding opportunities.

#### Create statewide Sheriff training module for homicide investigation protocol of all medication/drug deaths

NC Sheriff's Association legal counsel says they do not have a statewide protocol. Currently investigation protocols are left up to individual sheriffs and city police departments. Tap into Sheriffs who have homicide investigation protocols then utilize them to develop statewide education/training module.

#### Create NC Conference of DAs Module on Prosecution of Supplier/Dealers in Medication/Drug Homicides

Tap into NC DAs who effectively prosecute these cases then utilize them to develop an education module for NC Conference of DAs.

#### Amend GS 14-401.11 Distribution of Certain Food or Beverage Prohibited:

Under Penalties section for (b) (1) ADD (c) where the actual or possible effect on a person eating or drinking the food, beverage, or other substance **was death, shall be punished as a Class B Felony.** Victim family members lobby their own NC Rep and Senator

4,992 NC Fentanyl Victim Deaths 2020 & 2021. Victims in all 100 NC Counties  
Fentanyl victim deaths are recorded as far back as 2014