

FENTANYL ABUSE AND PREVENTION
Adopted by Convention Delegates April 2025

- WHEREAS, Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid prescription drug approved by the Food and Drug Administration for use as an analgesic (pain relief) and anesthetic. Fentanyl is approximately 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin as an analgesic; and
- WHEREAS, Illicitly Manufactured Fentanyl (IMF) is available in different forms, including liquid and powder. In its liquid form, fentanyl can be found in nasal sprays, eye drops, and dropped onto paper or small candies. In its powdered form, fentanyl may be mixed with drugs like heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine or made into pills that are intended to resemble other prescription opioids; and
- WHEREAS, Fentanyl-laced drugs are extremely dangerous, and an overdose can cause breathing to slow or stop resulting in hypoxia which can lead to a coma, permanent brain damage, and death; and
- WHEREAS, Synthetic opioids, including fentanyl, are now the most common drugs involved in drug overdose deaths in the United States. Drug overdose deaths among adolescents (aged 10 – 19 yrs old) increased 109% from the end of 2019 to the end of 2021 with deaths involving illicitly manufactured fentanyl increasing 182% and 25% of adolescent deaths involving counterfeit pills; and
- WHEREAS, Many overdoses have occurred because people did not know that what they were taking was contaminated with fentanyl and additionally, two-thirds of drug overdoses had one or more potential bystanders present, but most provided no overdose response; and
- WHEREAS, Naloxone is a medicine that can temporarily treat a fentanyl overdose when given right away allowing time for medical help to arrive; therefore be it
- RESOLVED, That the West Virginia PTA, its parent association National PTA, and its constituent associations support funding and implementation of evidence-based comprehensive substance use education, prevention or early intervention programs that are

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differentiated for and accessible to all learners and which include community stakeholders in developing locally effective programs; and be it further,

- RESOLVED, That the West Virginia PTA, its parent association National PTA, and its constituent associations support educating adolescents about the dangers of illicitly manufactured fentanyl and counterfeit pills and how to identify and respond to an overdose; and be it further,
- RESOLVED, That the West Virginia PTA, its parent association National PTA, and its constituent associations support all schools having a supply of naloxone and training school staff and bus drivers in overdose recognition and response; and be it further,
- RESOLVED, That the West Virginia PTA, its parent association National PTA, and its constituent associations support drug-checking programs that may include harm reduction counseling, health education, and substance abuse treatment and be it further,
- RESOLVED, That the West Virginia PTA, its parent association National PTA, and its constituent associations support community integrated programs that focus on building youth resiliency and expanding access to mental health counseling and substance abuse treatment.

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BACKGROUND SUMMARY:

Fentanyl is an extremely potent synthetic opioid that is often mixed with other substances, increasing the risk of overdose. Education programs can help individuals recognize the dangers, learn about the signs of overdose, and understand how to protect themselves. Many people may not be aware of the risks associated with fentanyl, especially those who are using drugs recreationally or may not even know fentanyl is involved. Education programs can target at-risk groups, such as young people or people with existing substance use issues, and reduce the chances of accidental overdose.

Fentanyl-related overdose deaths have surged in recent years. By funding education programs, we can equip people with knowledge about safe use practices, how to avoid counterfeit drugs and the importance of having naloxone (an opioid overdose reversal drug) available in case of emergency.

Naloxone is a life-saving medication that can reverse opioid overdoses when administered promptly. Having naloxone available in schools and training staff on how to use it means that if an overdose occurs, there's a clear action plan. This quick intervention can prevent long-term harm or fatalities.

Substance use disorders are often surrounded by stigma, which can prevent people from seeking help. Educational programs can foster empathy and understanding, encouraging individuals who struggle with substance use to seek treatment or support without fear of judgment. In short, education is a preventive measure, an intervention, and a tool to break cycles of harm, potentially saving countless lives and reducing the overall impact of the fentanyl crisis.