

Emerging Trends and Counterfeit Pills

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OVERDOSE RESPONSE STRATEGY

The Overdose Response Strategy is an unprecedented and unique collaboration between public health and public safety, created to help local communities reduce drug overdoses and save lives by sharing timely data, pertinent intelligence and innovative strategies.

Mission:

To help communities reduce fatal and non-fatal drug overdose rates by improving information sharing across agencies and supporting evidence-based interventions.



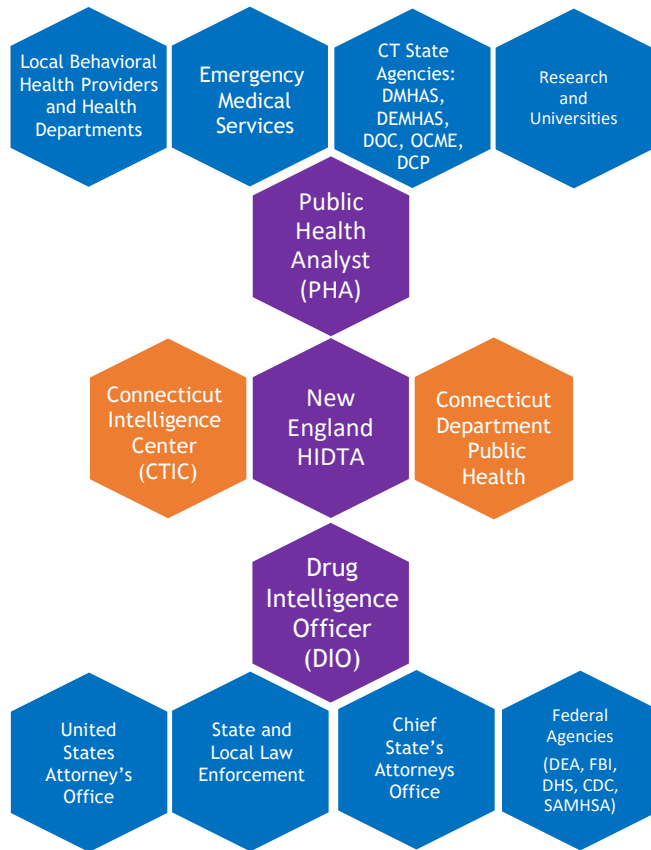
Collaborate across public health and public safety sectors



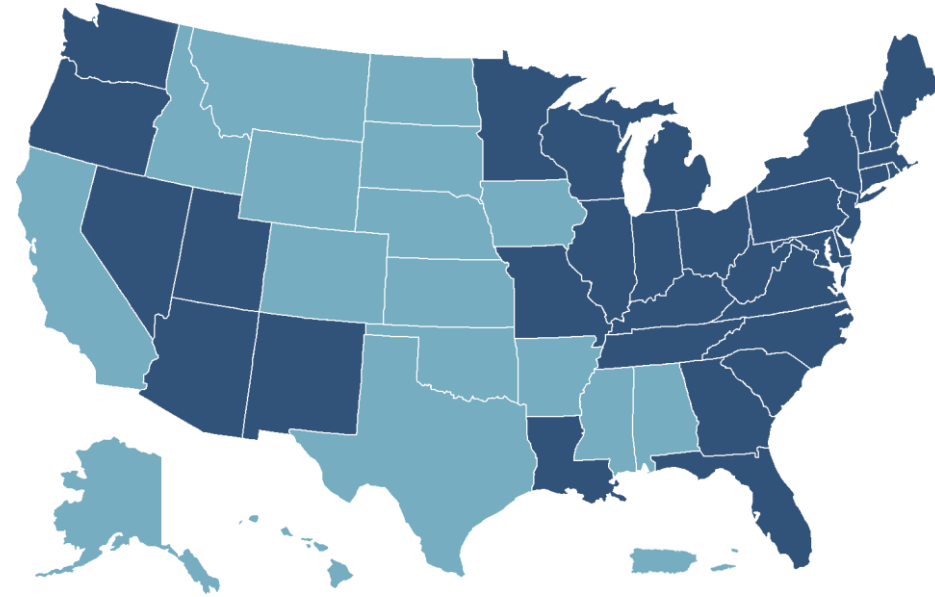
Share data, insights, and trends related to drug overdose in our communities



Inform & help local communities develop local solutions to reduce overdoses and save lives



The ORS is implemented by state teams comprised of a **Drug Intelligence Officer (DIO)** and a **Public Health Analyst (PHA)**. DIOs and PHAs are responsible for helping to increase communication, data flow, and intelligence sharing between public safety and public health sectors within and across ORS states.



DIO & PHA

DIO-ONLY

Current Work and Partners



- Connecticut Intelligence Center and State Police
- Department of Health and Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services
- Regional Behavioral Health Action Organization
- Forensic Lab
- Office of Chief Medical Examiner
- Chief State's Attorney's Office
- Office of EMS/SWORD
- CT Probation/Court Support Services
- Drug Free Communities Coalitions

- **Overdose and Crisis Outreach Project with CT State Police**
- ***You Think You Know* Counterfeit Pill Awareness Campaign**
- **Surveillance and Drug Checking Projects**
- **Situational Awareness Products Produced**

OVERDOSE RESPONSE STRATEGY

PUBLIC HEALTH | PUBLIC SAFETY | PARTNERSHIP



Marijuana with Fentanyl Awareness

Connecticut Overdose Response Strategy (CT-ORS)

The CT ORS and the Connecticut Department of Public Health, Office of Emergency Medical Services received reports of overdose patients who exhibited opioid overdose symptoms and required naloxone for revival. These patients denied any opioid use and claimed to have only smoked marijuana.

Recent incidents where only marijuana use was reported but naloxone was required:

- July 2021 – 11 cases
- August 2021 – 9 cases
- September 2021 – 9 cases
- October 1 - 26, 2021 – 10 cases

The reported incidents were dispersed across Connecticut. Several jurisdictions had multiple overdoses with opioid symptoms attributed to marijuana, however no pattern was detected. In early October, Plymouth, Connecticut had several overdose incidents where naloxone was required for revival and patients claimed to have only smoked marijuana. At one of these overdose scenes, Plymouth Police Department was able to secure a sample of the marijuana for testing at the state laboratory.

The Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Scientific Services Forensic Lab confirmed that the sample of marijuana obtained by Plymouth Police Department tested positive for the following:

- Delta-9-Tetrahydrocannabinol
- Marijuana
- Fentanyl

This is the first lab confirmed case of marijuana with fentanyl in Connecticut and possibly the first confirmed case in the United States.

Based on the lab's testing protocols they did not determine the form (salt) of fentanyl. The CT ORS Team will continue to work with the lab to see if this testing is possible. We will update when any new information becomes available.

The CT ORS Team is working with the Connecticut State Police HIDTA Taskforces to ascertain just how pervasive of an issue this is across Connecticut.



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OVERDOSE RESPONSE STRATEGY

PUBLIC HEALTH | PUBLIC SAFETY | PARTNERSHIP



Marijuana with Fentanyl Awareness

Connecticut Overdose Response Strategy (CT-ORS)

January 19, 2022

UPDATED INFORMATION

Federal and State partners reviewed the 39 suspected incidents where only marijuana use was reported. The review revealed that in at least 30 of the 39 incidents, the patient(s) had a history of opioid use, previous opioid overdose, exposure to multiple substances, or other mitigating factors.

The State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Scientific Services Forensic Lab reviewed all marijuana plant samples submitted to the lab from July 1, 2021 to November 30, 2021, and found no other marijuana submissions containing fentanyl.

The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Lab confirmed the presence of fentanyl in the marijuana sample analyzed by the State of Connecticut Department of Emergency Services and Public Protection, Division of Scientific Services Forensic Lab submitted by Plymouth Police Department in early October 2021.

Based on the information gathered since the positive confirmation of marijuana with fentanyl, the CT ORS assesses that the positive confirmation of marijuana with fentanyl was likely an unintentional contamination and an isolated incident.

THC Vapes



Fatal Overdose in Hartford



Marijuana Edibles



Effects of Marijuana Edibles

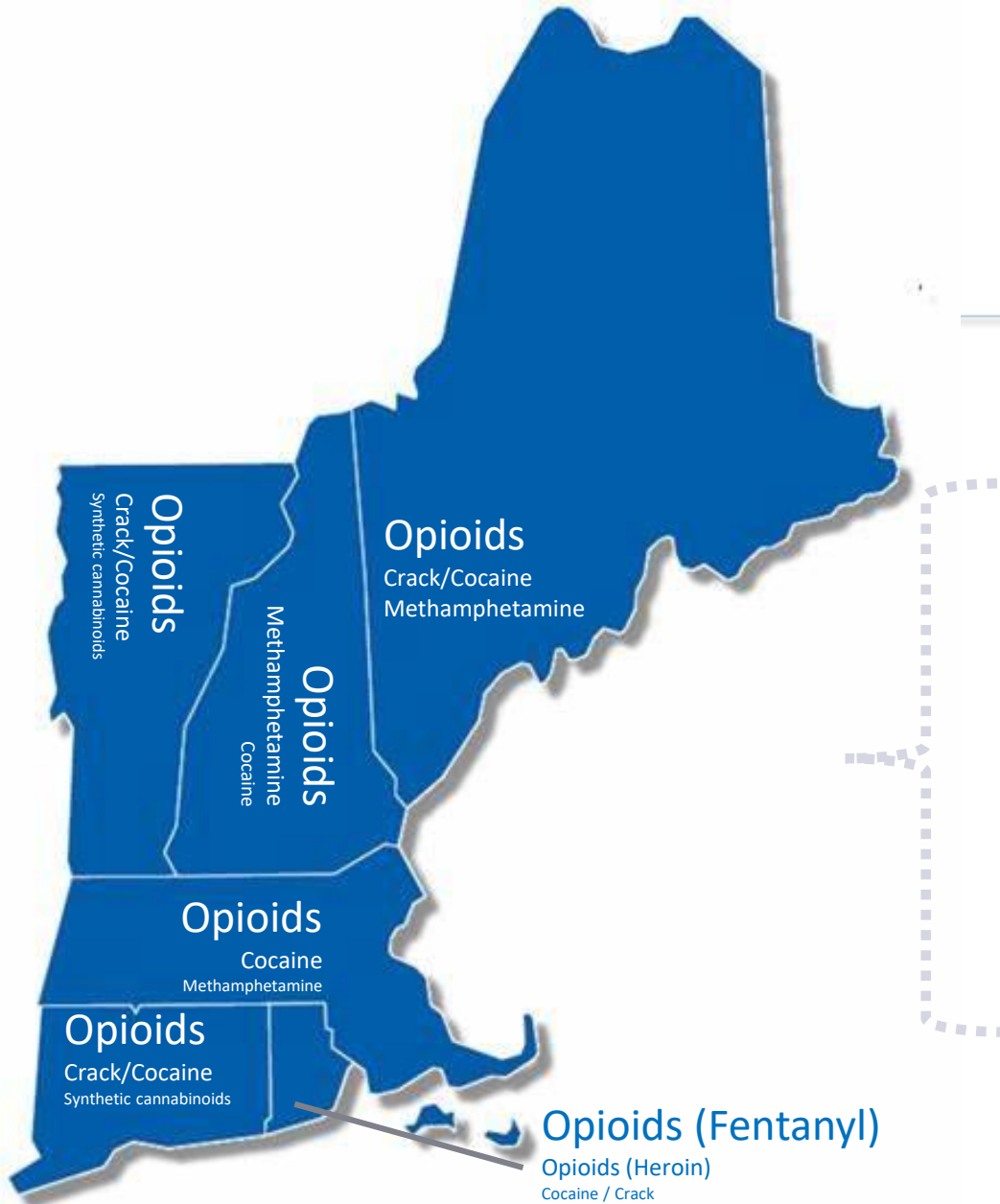
- Take between 1-3 hours to absorb
- Psychotic episodes
- Hallucinations
- Paranoia
- Panic attacks
- Impaired motor ability
- Overdose symptoms are often more severe than an overdose from smoking marijuana



*Source: JustThinkTwice.gov;
NIDA, 2018 Monitoring the Future Study*

Trends across New England:

Increasing Synthetics, Stimulants and Changing Drug Delivery Systems



Drugs

New Psychoactive Substances (NPS)

- Synthetic Cannabinoids
- Synthetic Cathinones
- Synthetic phenethylamines
- Synthetic Opioids

Stimulants

- Methamphetamine/Crystal Meth
- Crack/Cocaine

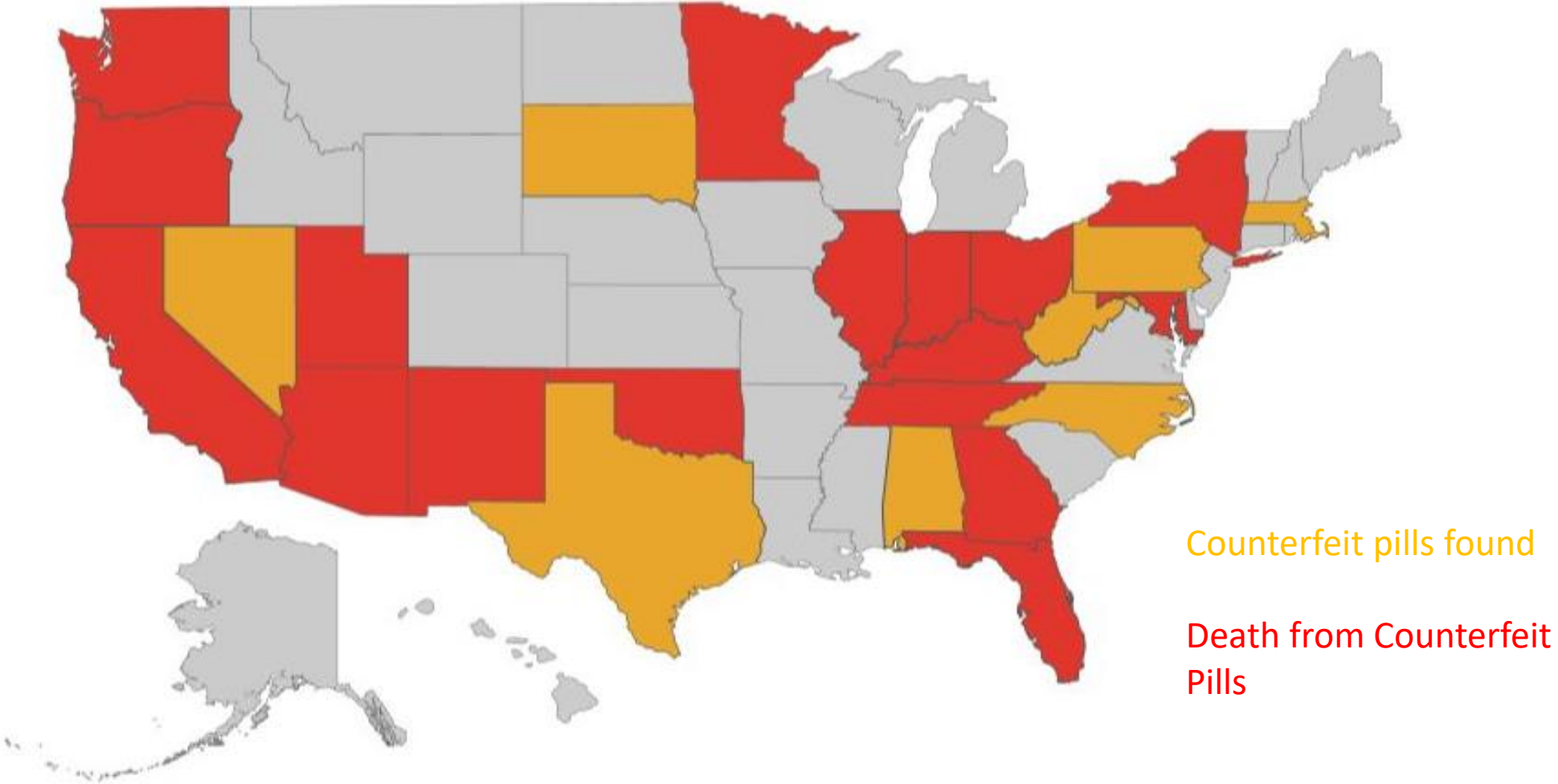
Mechanisms

Counterfeit Pills

Poly Drug Use

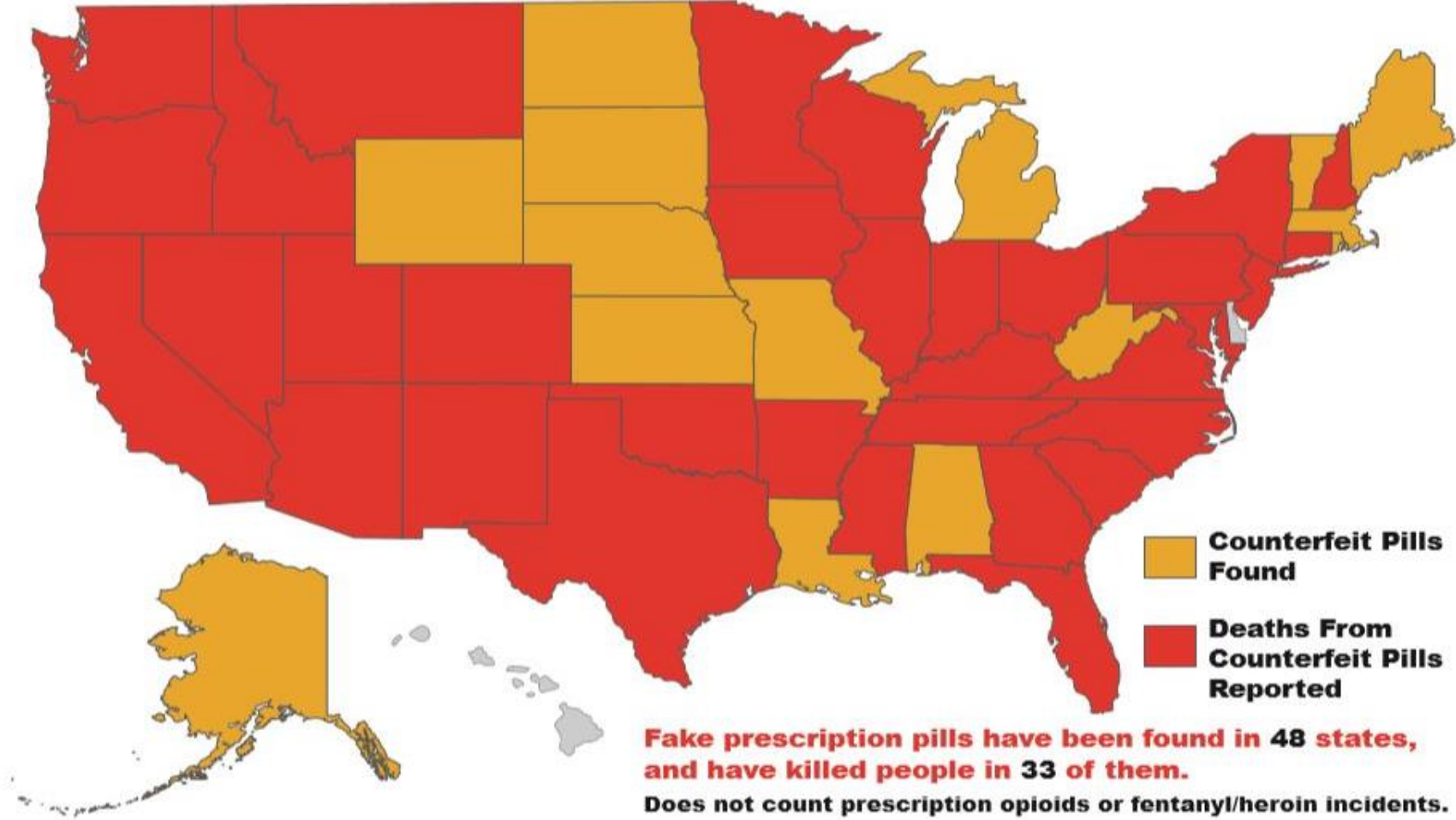
Vaping

Counterfeit Pills in the United States 2016



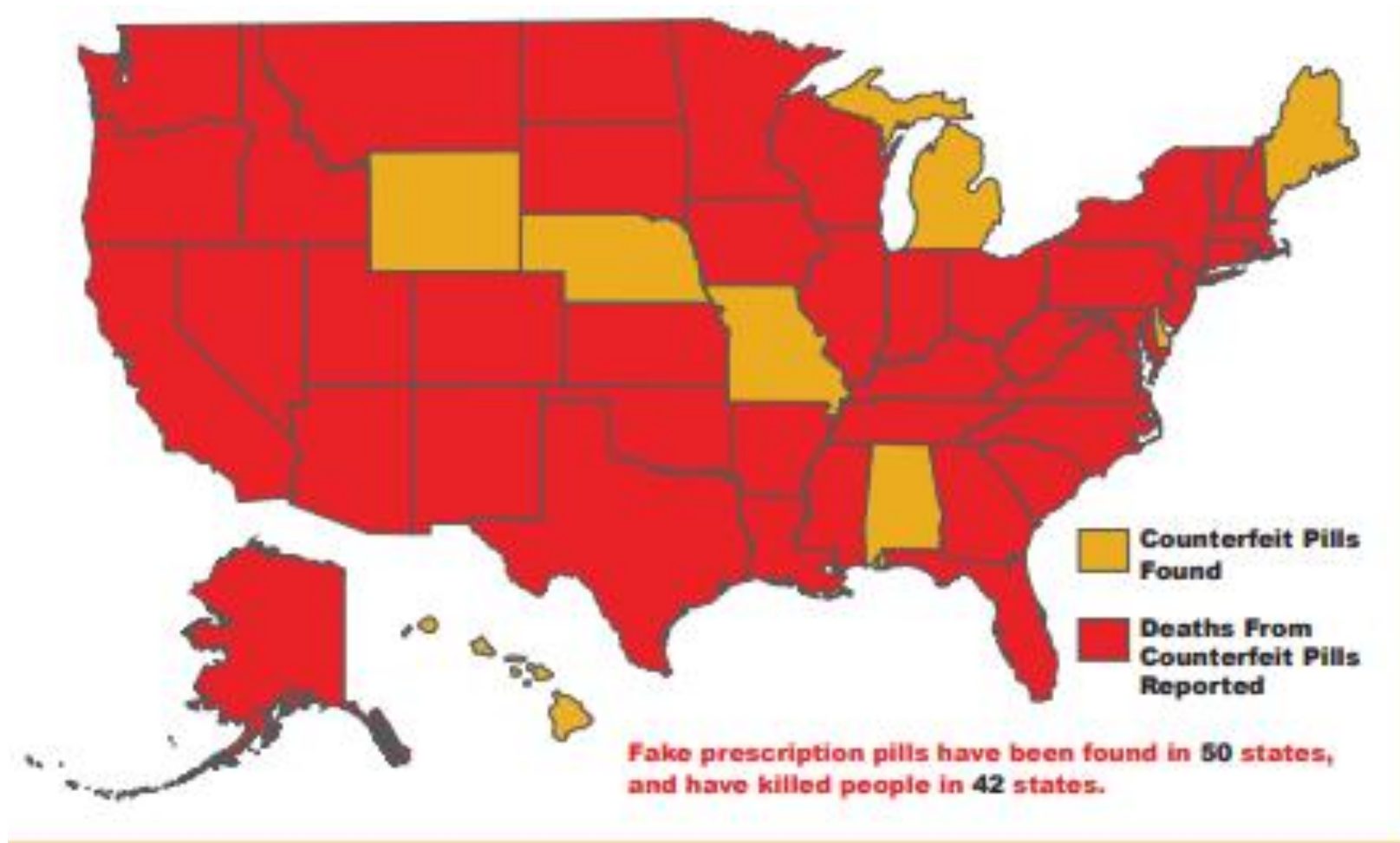
Source: Safemedicines.org

Counterfeit Pills in the United States 2019



Source: Safemedicines.org

Counterfeit Pills in the United States October 2020

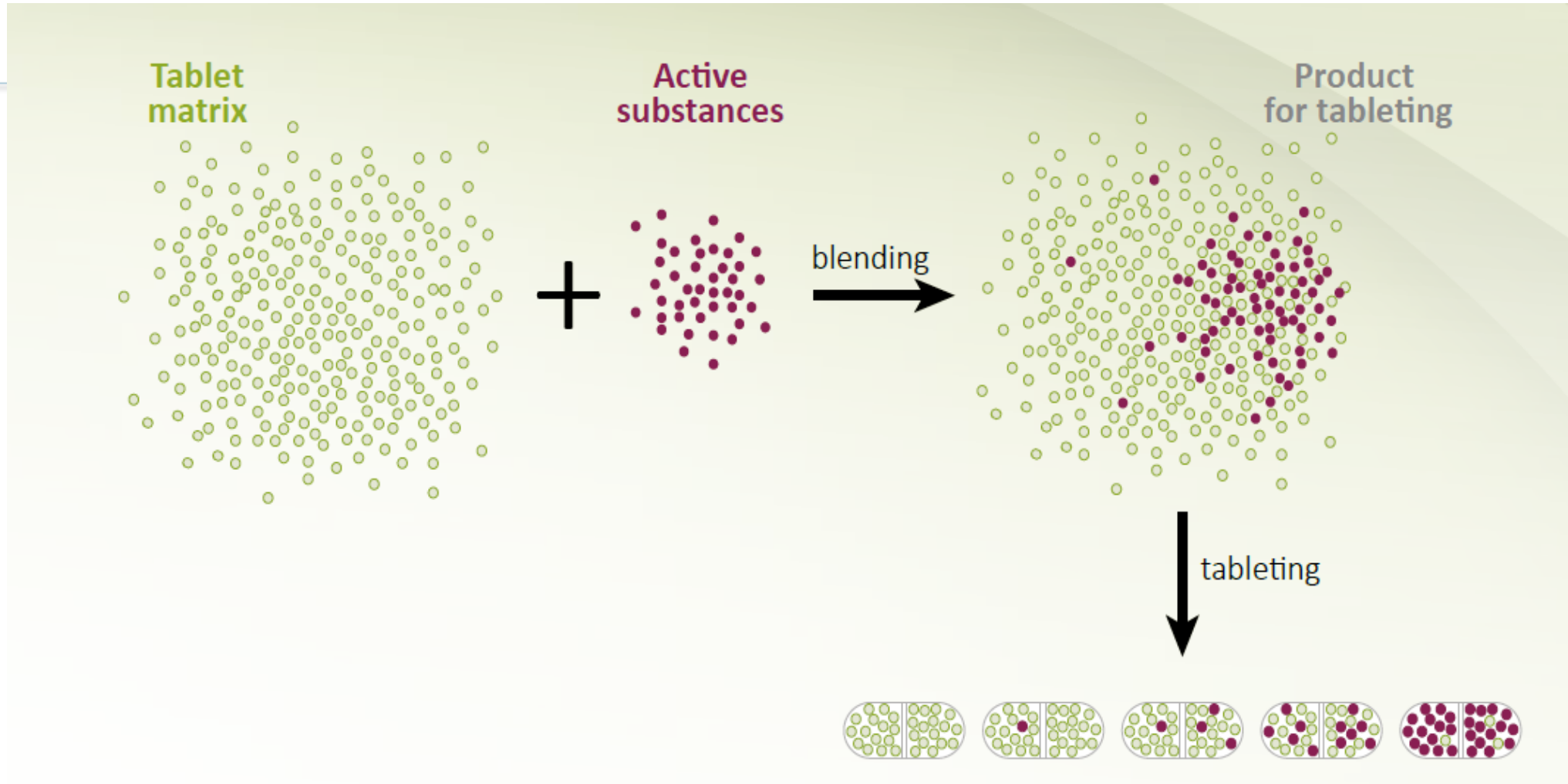


Source: Safemeds.org

Dangers of Counterfeit Pills

- Disguises illicit drugs as legitimate medication
 - Less stigma with pill use than traditional drug use
- Provides a false sense of safety
 - Individuals think they know exactly what they're buying
- Dosing is not exact
- Increasing potency of synthetics

Imprecise dosing of counterfeit pills



Source: DEA



Connecticut SNTF 9/29/2021

Connecticut DEA



Source: Connecticut DEA

CT Counterfeit Pills



**Seized in Tolland County 2020
contained:**

Fentanyl, Tramadol, Lidocaine

Should contain;

Oxycodone Hydrochloride

CT Counterfeit Pills



Seized in Tolland County 2021

Contained: Etizolam

Should contain: Alprazolam

CT Counterfeit Pills



Seized in Middletown 2020

Sold as Molly

Contained: Methamphetamine

Counterfeit Drug Seizures

Methamphetamine pills sold as MDMA 2019



Methamphetamine pills, Rhode Island 2019



Sold as and included Xanax (Alprazolam) but **two** also with fentanyl, a third included cocaine

REAL OXYCODONE



VS COUNTERFEIT



REAL XANAX



VS COUNTERFEIT



Source: Dava Pharma Stock Photo

One Pill Can Kill



**PUBLIC SAFETY
ALERT**

**DEA Warns that Pills
Purchased Outside of
a Licensed Pharmacy
are Illegal,
Dangerous, and
Potentially Deadly**



PUBLIC SAFETY ALERT

Sharp Increase in Fake Prescription Pills Containing Fentanyl and Methamphetamine

*DEA Warns that International and Domestic Criminal Drug Networks
are Flooding the United States with Lethal Counterfeit Pills*

September 27, 2021 – The Drug Enforcement Administration warns the American public of the alarming increase in the lethality and availability of fake prescription pills containing fentanyl and methamphetamine. International and domestic criminal drug networks are mass-producing fake pills, falsely marketing them as legitimate prescription pills, and killing unsuspecting Americans. These counterfeit pills are easy to purchase, widely available, and often contain deadly doses of fentanyl. Pills purchased outside of a licensed pharmacy are illegal, dangerous, and potentially lethal. This alert does **not** apply to legitimate pharmaceutical medications prescribed by medical professionals and dispensed by pharmacists.

DEA and its law enforcement partners are seizing deadly fake pills at record rates. More than 9.5 million counterfeit pills were seized so far this year, which is more than the last two years combined. Officials report a dramatic rise in the number of counterfeit pills containing at least two milligrams of fentanyl, which is considered a deadly dose. The number of DEA-seized counterfeit pills with fentanyl has jumped nearly 430 percent since 2019, a staggering increase. DEA laboratory testing further reveals that today, two out of every five pills with fentanyl contain a potentially lethal dose. Additionally, methamphetamine is increasingly being pressed into counterfeit pills.

Social Media

JAN
18
2022

Expanding our Work to Combat the Fentanyl Epidemic



EMOJI DRUG CODE | DECODED

COMMON EMOJI CODES

FAKE PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

PERCOCET & OXYCODONE



XANAX



ADDERALL



DEALER SIGNALS

DEALER ADVERTISING



HIGH POTENCY



UNIVERSAL FOR DRUGS



LARGE BATCH



OTHER DRUGS

METH



HEROIN



COCAINE



MDMA & MOLLIES



MUSHROOMS



COUGH SYRUP



MARIJUANA



This reference guide is intended to give parents, caregivers, educators, and other influencers a better sense of how emojis are being used in conjunction with illegal drugs. Fake prescription pills, commonly laced with deadly fentanyl and methamphetamine, are often sold on social media and e-commerce platforms - making them available to anyone with a smartphone.

#ONEPILLKILL
dea.gov/onepill

Disclaimer: These emojis reflect common examples found in DEA investigations. This list is not all-inclusive, and the images above are a representative sample.





[YouThinkYouKnowCT.org](https://www.YouThinkYouKnowCT.org)

You Think You Know Campaign

All prescription drugs serve a purpose, but they are only safe when they are used as prescribed by the person they were prescribed to.

R_x

NAME _____ AGE _____
ADDRESS _____
DATE _____

Top 5 Controlled Drugs Most Likely to be in Your Medicine Cabinet

1. Xanax (Alprazolam)
2. ADHD drugs, specifically Adderall (Amphetamine Salts)
3. Klonopin (Clonazepam)
4. Oxycontin (Oxycodone HCL)
5. Ativan (Lorazepam)

KNOW THE SOURCE

Not prescribed to you?
Not from a pharmacy?
NOT SAFE!

You can't tell real from fake by looks.

REAL XANAX	VS COUNTERFEIT
	
REAL ADDERALL	VS COUNTERFEIT
	
REAL OXYCODONE	VS COUNTERFEIT
	

Talking to Your Kids About Fentanyl

- Listen first: Ask what they know or have heard about the drug
- Explain the realities: fentanyl-laced drugs are widespread and look identical to pills prescribed by doctors, the first dose can be deadly
- Be clear about the risks: even pills from a "trusted source" or friend may be laced, the person selling or sharing the drugs may not even know the pills contain fentanyl
- Help them find naloxone: Overdose deaths are preventable, contact your regional behavioral health organization for training and resources
- Stress the importance of not sharing **for one another**

[View post on network](#)

www.youthinkyouknowct.org

Where Do Teens & Young Adults Get Prescription Pills?



Friends & Family: 49% of teens report getting RX drugs from a friend and 42% reported getting them from their parent's medicine cabinet.

Social Media: Some teens and young adults have turned to social media, mostly Snapchat and Instagram, to buy what they believe are RX drugs.



Why Are They Using Them?

A young person may turn to drugs for many reasons including:

- Self-medicating for anxiety/depression
- Ease social anxiety and have fun
- Study aid or professional success
- Weight loss
- Stress
- Improve sports performance / pain
- Boredom
- To fall asleep or stay awake

What You Can Do

Conversations and modeling good behavior are keys to prevention!

- Have an honest conversation about the dangers of RX drug misuse.
- Make them aware of that ANYONE can encounter a counterfeit pill and it only takes **one pill** to cause serious illness or death.
- If your kids take RX drugs, let them know it's dangerous to share their medications.
- Lock up all RX medications in your home and safely dispose of unused/expired ones.

Visit YouThinkYouKnowCT.org for more resources and tips.



Talking to Your Kids About Counterfeit Prescription Drugs

Depending what's inside, one pill can be deadly. Talk to your kids today!

Dispel the Myths

MYTH: Prescription drugs are safer than illegal drugs.
FACT: If the prescription drug is not prescribed for YOU and it doesn't come from a retail pharmacy, it is not safe.

MYTH: It's okay to take a prescription medication from a friend because I know them.
FACT: Again, if the prescription drug is not prescribed for YOU, it is not safe. Additionally, even if it's from a person you know, you don't know where they got the pill from.

MYTH: You can't overdose on prescription drugs.
FACT: Yes you can! If you don't take the medication as prescribed, you can overdose. If you purchase it from a third-party or get it from a friend, you don't know where it came from, so it could contain deadly substances like Fentanyl.

MYTH: If it looks real, it probably is.
FACT: Definitely not! People that produce counterfeit pills go out of their way to make them look real. They use special pill presses to make the same imprints as real pills have. To the untrained eye, they look real. Don't take that chance! The only safe place to get prescription pills from is a retail pharmacy.

MYTH: Taking Adderall or other stimulants can help me get better grades.
FACT: According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse, researchers have found that ADHD drugs, like Adderall and Ritalin, do not improve academic performance in teens who don't have ADHD. However, it still affects their body and brain.

Talking Points

EXPLAIN THE DANGER: Kids have already heard "drugs are bad." Let them know prescription drugs aren't bad when taken as prescribed by the person they were prescribed for. However, they need to know it can be dangerous to take a pill from a friend, off the street or online because it could contain harmful substances that have the potential to cause a fatal overdose.

LET THEM KNOW YOU ARE THERE FOR THEM: We know many teens and young adults who try prescription drugs (without a prescription) are doing so to try to manage anxiety, stress, depression, do better in school or sports, or out of boredom. Let them know they can come to you if they are struggling and that you will connect them with the help they need.

IT REALLY DOES ONLY TAKE ONE PILL: Young people need to know that when substances, like Fentanyl, are added to a pill, there aren't always second chances.

PILLS THAT ARE BOUGHT ON SOCIAL MEDIA ARE TYPICALLY COUNTERFEIT: The majority of pills sold on social media are fake. Even if the pill doesn't contain Fentanyl, it may contain other harmful substances that can make you very sick. No matter how real they look, don't take that chance and put your life at risk!

For additional resources, visit YouThinkYouKnowCT.org



Project Data – You Think You Know

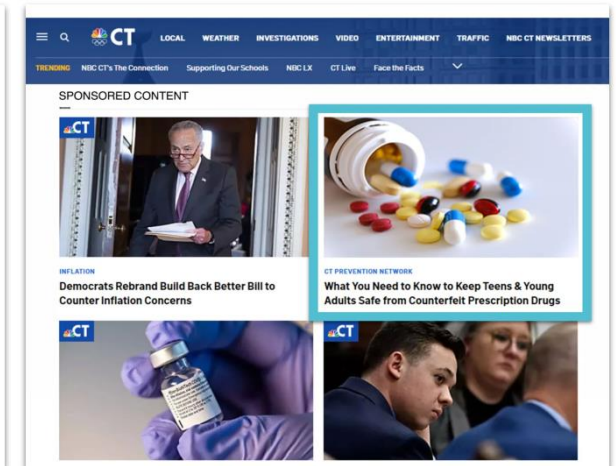
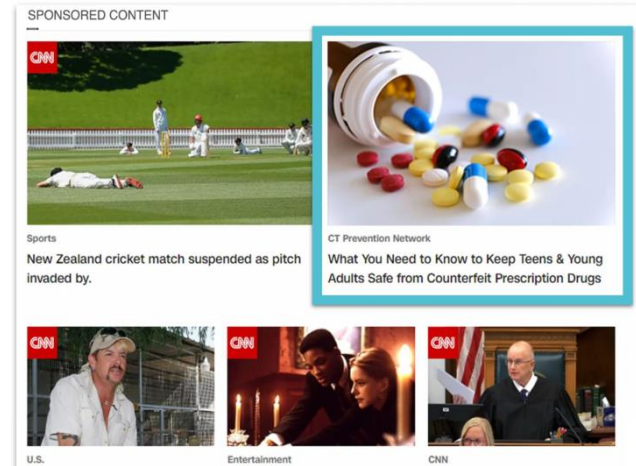
Bus Ads & Bus Shelter Ads

Ran in Hartford, New Haven, Stamford, New London, Waterbury & Bridgeport with more than 2.8 million impressions in the month-long run.



Paid Article & Banner Ad

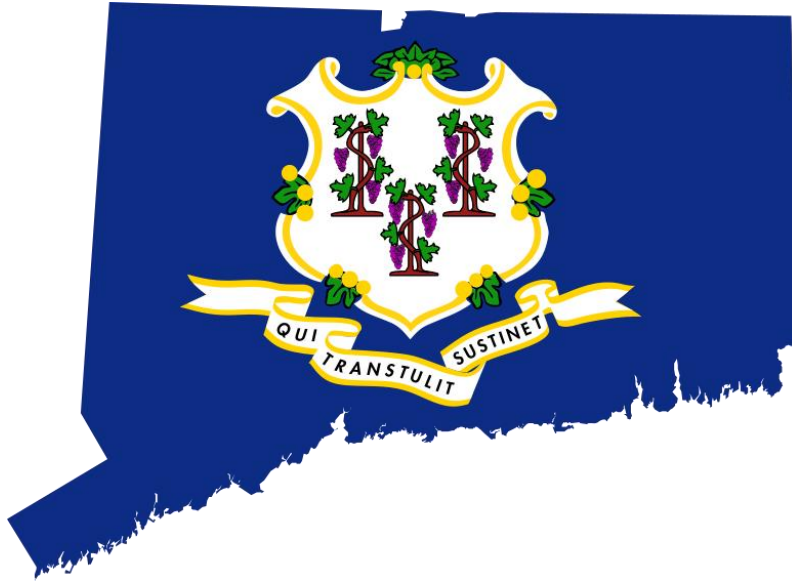
Article ran in Hearst online papers and promoted as sponsored content on national and local websites



Over 5,000 engagements on Social Media accounts
Billboards on major highways
TV News Interviews and Hearst online newspapers
CADCA: Coalitions in Action Newsletter

Received 623,954 impressions and 2,679 engagements targeted geographic region. 2,561 clicks within article.

Thank you!



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<http://www.hidtaprogram.org/>