



MEMORANDUM

TO: All Department of Children and Families Staff
FROM: Michael Williams, DC Operations and Jodi Hill-Lilly, DC Administration
DATE: August 24, 2023
SUBJECT: Enhanced Safety Guidance for Cases Involving Fentanyl and Substance Use

The percentage of overdose deaths attributable to fentanyl continues to be concerning and has impacted a number of families served by the Department of Children and Families (DCF). As overdose deaths continue in Connecticut, it is incumbent upon us to ensure caregivers and youth are connected to timely substance use treatment, recovery resources, and education on harm reduction strategies. The early identification of substance use in the home and supporting individuals in accessing treatment quickly will assist in ensuring children's safety.

This document serves to replace the interim guidance issued in October 2022 regarding fentanyl involved cases. The new enhanced guidance expands the focus to cases involving fentanyl, opioids, and other substances. We will continue with an interdisciplinary approach to ensure child safety, as well as support parents and caregivers by ensuring they are connected to treatment and supportive services which can be life-saving, such as medication assisted treatment (MAT) or medication for opioid use disorder (MOUD).

Effective October 2, 2023 and in accordance with the [Substance Use Screening & Testing Policy 21-7](#) and the [Substance Use Practice Guide 21-7](#), the [UNCOPE screening tool](#) shall be conducted at intake during the initial home visit and as needed during the pendency of the case to assess for substance use. The tool shall be administered in a trauma-sensitive manner and using family-centered engagement practices. The tool shall be used in conjunction with Structured Decision Making (SDM) tools and informed by the ABCD paradigm.

When a safety factor related to substance use is identified, social work staff shall consult with their supervisor immediately, and within one business day request a Level 1 Regional Resource Group (RRG) consultation by emailing the RRG Consultation Referral Form to their RRG regional mailbox. The email should be titled "*High Priority (Level 1 Substance Use Case)*." The social worker's chain of command should be copied on the email up to and including the Office Director, as well as the Behavioral Health Clinical Manager and Office Staff Attorney. **Within 72 hours**, a Substance Use [Multidisciplinary Team Meeting \(MDTM\)](#) shall be held and documented on the Substance Use MDTM Outline and in LINK.

Please note, the MDTM must be held within **24 hours** for **Critical Incidents** involving substance use. Please see the [decision tree](#) for additional guidance.

Education & Skills Enhancement Opportunity

To support the implementation of this guidance and the continued enhancement of our workforce's knowledge and skills related to substance use, a self-guided on-line training is available to all employees and must be completed by all employees by September 30, 2023. [Click here to access the training.](#) This training will count toward all employees' 30-hour annual in-service training requirement. Additionally, identified cohorts of employees will receive in-person skills-based training in their Area Office to support their use of the UNCOPE screening tool and substance use practice. Asynchronous training is required to be viewed prior to receiving in-person training. In-person skills-based training will be facilitated in partnership by representatives from the Behavioral Health Administration, Regional Resource Group, and Child Welfare. Schedules for the in-person skills sessions are forthcoming.

NORA Application on State Cell Phones

The NORA "app" is available on all state cell phones to assist with identifying signs of overdose, where to access Naloxone, substance use treatment options, and other overdose prevention strategies. Secure storage containers for families are available in each Area Office and through 211 and DCF contracted providers.