

STATE OF CONNECTICUT

DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

Manisha Juthani, MD
Commissioner



Ned Lamont
Governor
Susan Bysiewicz
Lt. Governor

Environmental Health Section

MEMO

TO: FILE

From: Sharee Rusnak, Epidemiologist 3 **SR**

Thru: Meg Harvey, Epidemiologist 4 **MH**

CC: Jim Vannoy, Section Chief

Date: March 30, 2022

Re: Guidance to the Hartford Health Department During a Fentanyl Event at [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] in Hartford.

Background and Statement of Issues

On January 13, 2022, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH) was asked to provide guidance to the Hartford Health Department (HHD) during a fentanyl event at the [REDACTED] Hartford, Connecticut. [REDACTED] is a grade [REDACTED] school. This Letter Health Consultation (LHC) documents the details of the fentanyl event and the guidance that we provided to the HHD.

Providing technical assistance to local health departments about cleanup and re-occupancy of indoor spaces after spills or releases when there is potential exposure to chemicals or drug residues is a type of assistance that falls within the scope and purpose of the cooperative agreement program grant from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ASTDR). CT DPH has had an ATSDR cooperative agreement program for more than 30 years.



Phone: (860) 509-7101 • Fax: (860) 509-7111
Telecommunications Relay Service 7-1-1
410 Capitol Avenue, P.O. Box 340308
Hartford, Connecticut 06134-0308
www.ct.gov/dph

Affirmative Action/Equal Opportunity Employer



The Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (CT DEEP) Spills Program notified CT DPH on January 13, 2022 that a fentanyl event occurred at [REDACTED] in Hartford. A student brought 40 small packets of fentanyl to school, opened them, and inhaled a few of the packets with two other students in a classroom. All three students were taken to the hospital after being exposed to the fentanyl and one later died. The school was closed immediately and later cleaned by an environmental cleanup company hired and overseen by the CT DEEP Spills Program.

The HHD asked CT DPH to provide guidance regarding the recommended steps they should take before re-opening the school. CT DPH assisted the HHD in writing an Abatement Order to keep the school closed until the recommended steps were taken to ensure that fentanyl residues were no longer present at the school.

A contractor hired by the CT DEEP Spills Program performed a cleanup of the visible fentanyl contamination immediately after the spill event.

CT DPH recommended post cleanup clearance wipe sampling and analysis for the presence of fentanyl in the two classrooms, hallways, stairwell and gym where the CT DEEP Spills Program and the cleanup contractor identified that fentanyl was present and where the cleanup occurred. CT DPH also recommended replacing air filters in the two classrooms as well as classrooms adjacent to the affected classrooms. Both of these recommendations were carried out by the HHD and CT DEEP Spills Program.

CT DPH also provided the name of a lab to the CT DEEP Spills Program that would analyze wipe samples for fentanyl. In addition, CT DPH assisted the HHD with writing a letter to school parents which addressed health concerns from exposure to fentanyl and actions being taken to clean the school.

Environmental Contamination

Eighteen wipe samples were taken from two classrooms, a hallway, a stairwell and a gym where the DEEP Spills Program and the contractor cleaned up the fentanyl. The samples were taken to a lab and analyzed for the presence of fentanyl. Only one wipe sample out of 18 detected the presence of fentanyl (0.12 ug/cm²). This wipe sample was taken in Classroom [REDACTED] where the main release of the fentanyl and exposure to 3 students occurred at the school.

Discussion

Because a wipe sample taken from Classroom [REDACTED] detected fentanyl, CT DPH recommended a re-cleaning of this classroom and another round of wipe sampling and analysis for fentanyl in [REDACTED]. This recommendation is consistent with the United States Environmental Protection Agency's guidelines for addressing fentanyl events (EPA 2021). These recommendations were carried out by CT DEEP Spills Program and the HHD. [REDACTED] was re-cleaned and 5 additional wipe samples were taken and analyzed for the presence of fentanyl. The second set of wipe samples did not detect fentanyl and CT DPH recommended to the HHD that the school could be re-occupied. This recommendation was also carried out by HHD and the school was re-opened on January 19, 2022.

Conclusion and Recommendations

HHD followed all of CT DPH's recommended steps before re-opening the school. This ensured that there was no potential for students or school staff to be exposed to fentanyl during cleanup and after the school was re-opened. While the school was closed, HHD provided accurate and timely information to school parents so that they would be informed about the situation and the actions being taken to clean and safely reopen the school.

After the second round of wipe sampling, because fentanyl was not detected in the areas of the school impacted by the fentanyl release, CT DPH recommended that no further action was necessary.

Works Cited

2021 EPA. Voluntary Guidelines for Methamphetamine and Fentanyl Laboratory Cleanup. United States Environmental Protection Agency. *Available at:*
https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/meth_lab_guidelines.pdf. August 2021.

REPORT PREPARATION

This publication was made possible by Grant Number 1-NU61TS000297-01-00 from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. Its contents are solely the responsibility of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official views of the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry or the Department of Health and Human Services.

Author

Sharee M Rusnak, MSPH, ScD
Connecticut Department of Public Health