



## **Educating youth on the risks of lethality of using fentanyl and other opioids**

### **Why is this bill needed?**

Deaths from opioid overdose have increased dramatically in Washington state with an average of two deaths a day in 2023, according to the state Department of Health. For Washington's youth 24 and under, deaths from overdose have increased six-fold since 2017 and totaled more than 190 in 2022, and numbers are still climbing. More than 90% of these deaths are from fentanyl overdoses. One of the most troubling elements is that fentanyl can be laced into other drugs such as marijuana or look like prescription painkillers, so users might have no idea what they are consuming. Even the tiniest amount can be lethal. Among the most impacted populations are Tribes within Washington.

This bill (HB 1956/SB 5923) would require the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction to provide schools with high-quality education materials related to the risks of using fentanyl and other opioids. The bill would also adjust health standards to ensure that all students understand the risks of lethality of fentanyl and other opioids. Schools must provide this education as part of health classes to students in grades 7 and 9 and can add additional programming at their discretion. The bill encourages schools to use the high-quality education materials developed, and work with substance-use prevention specialists that are employed by educational service districts in all nine regions of the state.

### **Sponsors:**

Rep. Leavitt and Sen. Wellman

Requested by the Office of the Governor.

This bill is part of Gov. Jay Inslee's education strategy and complements actions to support law enforcement efforts to reduce the trafficking of synthetic opioids into Washington, and to increase treatment capacity of different kinds. The priority is to save lives now. The governor's supplemental budget for 2024 adds \$64 million to address fentanyl and opioid issues, on top of \$200 million allocated in the 2023-25 biennial budget. Additional information on Inslee's proposal to combat the opioid crisis is available in the [budget and policy highlights](#).

### **What does the bill do?**

- Provide schools with updated substance use prevention education materials by requiring OSPI to work with DOH (in consultation with local health jurisdictions), other state agencies, educational service districts and tribes. Updated materials are to be posted for school use by December 1, 2024.
- Require schools to consider using these high-quality materials when implementing health standards.

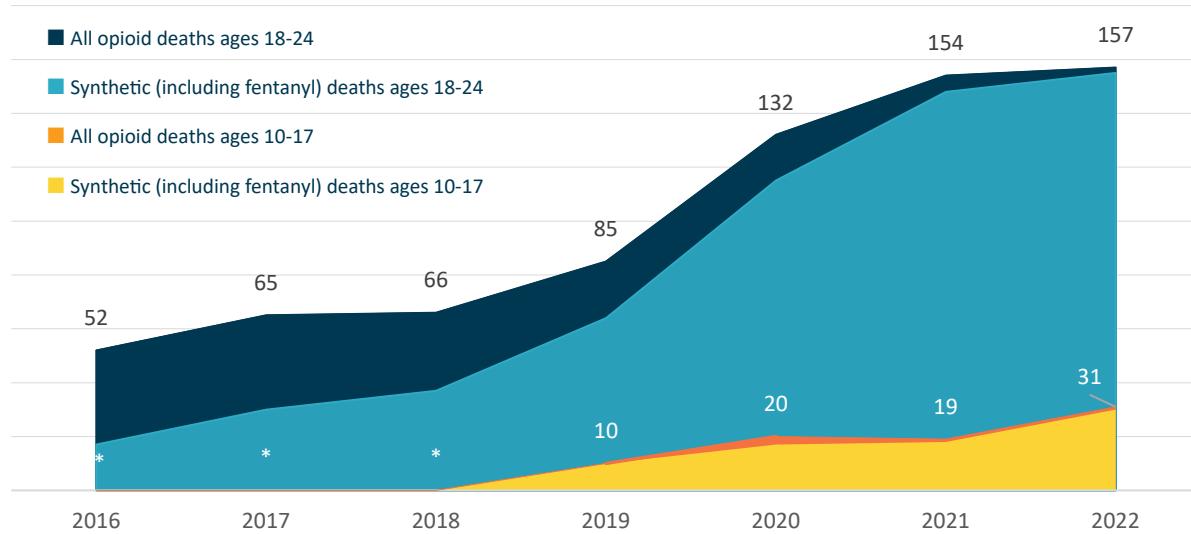
- Require OSPI to update health standards to include opioids, and specifically the risks of lethality of fentanyl and synthetic opioids by December 1, 2024.
- Fentanyl and other opioid prevention education delivered through health classes or other discretionary programs must be provided to as many seventh- and ninth-grade students as possible during the remainder of the 2024-25 school year, and annually to students in grades 7 and 9 thereafter; and schools may provide additional prevention education to students and invite their families.
- Encourage schools to work with substance use prevention specialists at educational service districts.\*
- OSPI, in consultation with educational service districts, the Health Care Authority, the Department of Health, and the Department of Children, Youth, and Families, is required to review substance use prevention education materials and resources at least once every other year to ensure they contain the most current information and must be based on strategies that have evidence of effectiveness to the greatest extent possible.

\* Note that educational service district prevention specialists were established in state law 28A.170.080 in 1997. Federal funds have supported some of these positions though it is not comprehensive.

Estimated four-year cost: \$7.19 million (\$7,065,000 to expand substance use prevention specialist services, \$125,000 to develop education materials.)

## Deaths from opioid overdoses have risen dramatically

Fentanyl and all opioid-related deaths in Washington residents aged 24 and under



Note: Counts that are below 10 are suppressed for privacy and represented with an “\*\*”  
 Source: Department of Health, [Opioid and Drug Overdose Data](#)