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- Lessons from the Field -

## Understanding Access and Promoting Safety: Youth and Online Drugs

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*Wednesday, March 20, 2024 | 3:00 – 4:30 PM ET*  
*Transcript*

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**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Good afternoon everyone. Welcome to today's webinar, Understanding Access and Promoting Safety: Youth and Online Drugs. On behalf of the United States Department of Education, we are so pleased to have you with us today and in fact, we have over 1200 people from all 50 states, Washington DC, two US territories, and 10 other countries registered for this webinar, so we expect more folks to be logging on shortly. This webinar is part of our Lessons from the Field webinar series. This series highlights effective tools, techniques, and strategies that are employed every day by people like you, practitioners in our schools, that to address the hot topics that are on the top of educators minds. You can access the recorded webinars from this series on the webpage, which is now being shared with you in chat. As always, as you participate in this and other webinars, we encourage you to share additional strategies you may have that are working for you and your communities by reaching out to the [bestpracticingsclearinghouse@ed.gov](mailto:bestpracticingsclearinghouse@ed.gov).

It's important for us to share the strategies that we all are using and that we're finding to be effective with our young people so that we can all do better work for our young people nationwide. Please note that the content of this presentation does not necessarily represent the policies or views of the United States Department of Ed, nor does it imply endorsement by the Department of Education. My name is Cindy Carraway-Wilson, and I'm a training specialist with the National Center on Safe Supportive Learning Environments or NCSSE. I'll be introducing the event today and then passing over the moderation to another colleague of mine. We want to tell you a little bit about NCSSE. NCSSE is funded by the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education. We hope that you'll visit our website and to give you an idea about our website, here you see an image of our homepage on the right-hand side, and on the left a few of the resources that are more commonly accessed to address school climate and conditions for learning.

We also share the latest resources and events coming out of the field via social media, so please do follow us. Please note that this webinar is being recorded and the recording of the webinar and all the materials you see today, including the slides, any referenced resources, that recording, and the bio pages are all going to be linked into the homepage for this event. And in fact, if you go to the event page, which is in the chat now, you can actually access those slides to follow along with today's presentations. Please also note that as I said earlier, you may access the previous versions for Lessons from the Field webinar series on that webpage.

Now I'd like to briefly review the agenda that we're going to be following today. We're going to begin with our logistics and intro, which is what we're doing now. In just a moment, we'll have our official welcome to launch the webinar from the U.S. Department of Education, and then we'll move right into several context setting presentations, which will give us more information about how young people are accessing substances online. Then we will move into our panel discussion to hear how individuals in the field are actively using information to help keep young people safer online and to help young people engage in prevention activities. After a brief closing of the content delivery, we'll spend the last 15 minutes in a live Q&A answering questions from you, our audience. So please make sure to use that Q&A button to post your questions. Now I'd like to introduce our welcome person, Ms. Elyse Robertson. Robertson is the Education Program Specialist out of the Office of Safe and Supportive Schools in the Office of Elementary and Secondary Education at the U.S. Department of Education. Elyse.

**Elyse Robertson:**

Thank you so much Cindy. On behalf of the U.S. Department of Education, I'm pleased to welcome you to our latest Lessons from the Field webinar, Understanding Access and Promoting Safety: Youth and Online Drugs. The internet, social media apps and other online spaces are an important part of students' lives. They visit these spaces for friendship, peer support, for entertainment, and a myriad of other reasons. These online spaces can be a positive place for young people. They can also expose young people to messages and marketing ploys that can lead them to engage in behavior that negatively impacts their health and well-being. The negative impacts of social media resulted in the Surgeon General's releasing an advisory on social media and youth mental health in 2023. In addition to concerns about youth mental health, online spaces and social media apps also make it easier for young people to access counterfeit medications and illicit substances.

In this webinar, we will hear about these counterfeit medications and illicit substances are being accessed, what might motivate young people to misuse substances, and what we can do to prevent and address substance misuse. Then we will hear presentations from the Drug Enforcement Administration and the US Postal Inspection Services who will share information about signs to be aware of that might indicate that young people are using social media and other online sites to purchase substances. We're excited to have panelists who will talk about their efforts to implement the DEA curriculum Operation Prevention in a school district. Panelists will also how to provide digital wellness education

to students to help them become informed consumers of online media and mitigate some of the negative impacts of online engagement. As we proceed with today's webinar, we know you'll hear valuable information and strategies that you'll be able to use in your schools and districts. Thank you again for joining us today. Now I'd like to turn it back to Cindy to introduce our context setting speakers.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Thank you so much Elyse. We appreciate the department's ongoing support for this webinar series and the important topics that come forward in it. Now it's my pleasure to introduce Mr. Kemp Chester, the Senior Advisor to the Director of National Drug Control Policy who will kick off our first presentation today. Mr. Chester.

**Kemp Chester:** Thank you very much Cindy, and thank you everyone for being here today, and I'd like to send my greetings on behalf of Dr. Rahul Gupta, the Director of National Drug Control Policy. Just by way of background, I came into the White House in October of 2015 to originally begin work on the heroin crisis and have been here ever since and how this crisis with opioids and eventually synthetic drugs has kind of developed sort of a narrative arc. And I've been with it for quite a while. And so what I'd like to describe to you right now is the environment that we're in and some of its major features kind of from the strategic level. I will tell you that the illicit drug production and trafficking environment that we're in right now is the most dynamic and complex that we've ever had in our history and potentially the most dangerous.

There was a time not long ago, and this is kind of the model that I think we all grew up with, where the principal problem we had was cultivated drugs, so it was heroin or cocaine, or it was crudely made methamphetamine as a synthetic drug that were produced and packaged and moved across the border through a hierarchical drug trafficking supply chain that ended in a face-to-face cash transaction somewhere in America. And that was the dominant model of drug production and trafficking that we had for over three decades, and we still have that. It still exists, however, that has been joined by a new more 21st century model of highly potent, potentially deadly synthetic opioids which move through and into the country through a variety of means. And essentially what we're dealing with now is not just hierarchical drug trafficking organizations, but what is in essence a global illicit business that has attached itself on the back of legitimate global commerce that moves money and people and ideas and goods around the world and across borders with incredible speed.

And it's exploiting that architecture in order to move raw materials and finished drugs around the world and into our communities also with incredible speed. And in what we know about this business is it really only moves in one direction, and that is toward expanded markets and greater profits because it's the profit that drives them in order to engage in this particular very dangerous activity. And in so doing, it looks at our young people as potential customers, and it's not that drug traffickers are out to kill people, it's even worse than that. It's that they don't care. They're out to make money, they're out to expand their customer base and expand their profits and if people get hurt, that's not really

their concern. And so this is a very different model than what we've had to deal with in the past, and it requires different tools for the United States government and our law enforcement authorities at the federal, state, local, tribal and territorial levels to be able to deal with this as the commercial enterprise that it is and not the exclusive criminal enterprise that it has been in the past.

I will tell you that when we talk about counterfeit pills, the emergence of counterfeit pills along with synthetic opioids has really been one of the most pernicious aspects of how this business has developed over the last several years because it gives drug producers and traffickers the widest possible customer base because it not only includes knowing illicit drug users or individuals with substance use disorders, but it also includes people who never intended to take an illicit drug in the first place. And so under the previous model, you had individuals who intended to buy heroin or intended to buy cocaine, and now you have individuals who believe what they're getting is a discounted Xanax brick when actually that's fentanyl pressed into a pill form that they never intended to take in a first place and they're poisoned to buy that drug.

Probably one of the most defining features of this environment is that rather than having to go to a face-to-face cash transaction somewhere in a community or somewhere in America, the ability for an American teenager to access an illicit drug is literally in the palm of his or her hand. And as simple as opening a social media app and social media and dislocated payments like through cryptocurrency or through Venmo allow drug traffickers to expand their market and their ability to be able to sell these drugs with an ease that they've never had before. So they never have to meet, the buyer and the seller never have to meet face-to-face. The individual can open a social media app and be able to access these drugs. There was a time when the preponderance of the drug trade and the trade in raw materials took place on the dark web and now takes place on what we call the clear web and in social media apps.

And so what I would tell you is this is what makes your efforts and what you're doing here today and what many of you do all year long so incredibly important because the first thing we need to do is we need to raise awareness among our youth and everyone that loves and cares for them, what the nature of this environment is and how potentially deadly and dangerous it can be. That's the first thing. And the second thing is to be able to exchange and develop and share ideas as to how we can protect our young people and protect our communities from the push of this global illicit business into communities everywhere. The last thing I'll tell you is the administration and the Office of National Drug Control Policy and all our departments and agencies have put a historic amount of resources into prevention and reducing barriers to treatment and reducing the harms of these drugs in order to be able to shrink the size of the market that actually pulls these drugs across our borders.

But it is equally important that we go after and disrupt this global commercial business so that we can relieve the pressure on our public health system and the flow of these inexorable drugs into our communities. And that's the

important thing that the administration is focused on doing. And that's what we do here at the Office of National Drug Control Policy, not only to work the public health aspects of this, but to also disrupt this global supply chain that's moving these drugs into our community. So I applaud your efforts. I thank you very much for everything that you do, and I thank you for having me here today, and I look forward to hearing your discussion, and I really do appreciate it. So thanks very much and I'll turn it back over to you Cindy.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Mr. Chester, thank you so much for that overview. I appreciate the emphasis of that complex and dynamic landscape that you described and also the reality that together we can work to strengthen the protective factors that can help protect our young people. Now it's my pleasure to introduce our next two speakers. Please welcome Dr. Jiang, who is a research health scientist in the Division of Overdose Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and Ms. Marci Hertz, who's the Associate Director of Program Implementation, also in the Division of Overdose Prevention at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Marci.

**Marci Hertz:** Thank you so much Cindy and thank you so much for having us and for all of you for attending this afternoon. My name is Marci Hertz as Cindy said, and I'm going to co-present with my colleague Dr. Xinyi Jiang who co-authored a recent publication examining the reasons why adolescents use a wide variety of substances. So I'm going to turn it over to her to present the data, and then I will return to talk a little bit about prevention implications. Dr. Jiang.

**Xinyi Jiang:** Thank you, Marci. To better understand the reasons for drug and alcohol use among adolescents, we at the CDC examined self-reported motivations for substance use among US adolescents aged from the age 13 to 18 years old being assessed for substance use disorder treatment from 2014 to 2022. This research was led by Dr. Sarah Connolly at the CDC, and was recently published in MMWR. We found that among the US adolescent assessments, 60% indicated past three day use of alcohol, marijuana, or other drugs. Overall, we found that the most common reasons adolescents reported for using substance were to feel mellow, calm, or relaxed, to have fun or experiment, to sleep better or to fall asleep, to stop worrying about the problem or to forget bad memories, to make something less boring and to help with depression or anxiety. The reasons varied by substance type. For example, the most frequently reported motivation for alcohol use and non-prescription drug misuse was to have fun or experiment.

Since with whom substance were used, we found that adolescents mostly commonly use substance with friends, a boyfriend or girlfriend, anyone who has drugs and someone else. However, 50 reported using substance alone. Our study highlights that firstly, it is necessary to promote interventions that teach healthy coping among all youth. Secondly, expand access to mental health and substance use treatment for adolescents with an increased risk for substance use and overdose. Thirdly, overdose deaths can be prevented through education tailored to adolescents to improve recognition of overdose signs, explain the risks of using substance alone and teach bystanders how to respond

to an overdose. These interventions could be implanted on a broad or local scale to improve adolescents well-being and reduce harms related to substance use. Now I'll hand it over to Marci to discuss more about the prevention implications for schools.

**Marci Hertz:**

Thank you so much. So as we heard from the data, a lot of the key driving factors that influence adolescent substance use are related to multifaceted set of circumstances and challenges, many of which relate to behavioral or mental health challenges. We saw things, for example, related to depression and anxiety, to feel calm, et cetera. So one of the key levers that are present in many schools across the country are school-based health centers. Recently, the School-Based Health Alliance just issued this new toolkit for screening brief intervention and referral to treatment or SBIRT to encourage uptake and integration of behavioral health into school-based health centers. And you can see here from the graphic on the slide that students are 20 more times likely to visit a school-based health center for behavioral health care that is mental health-related services than they are to visit a community clinic. And students with access to behavioral health services at student-based health centers report lower frequencies of cigarette use, marijuana use, and misuse of prescription drugs, for example, the press pill issue that Mr. Chester mentioned earlier.

It's important that schools and community-based organizations partner together to expand the reach and increase access to school-based health services and integrate mental health services into these important resources in school settings. Secondly, I just wanted to highlight student assistance programs. These have been around for many, many years. They're modeled after employees assistance programs if you're familiar with those. They consist of multidisciplinary teams both in the school and with community partners. They provide education, early identification, evidence-based intervention referral, and guided support for students. We know that schools have rules and consequences and handbooks, etc. But students' assistance programs, in addition to implementing consequences, actually provide services to help the young person recover and engage in less risky substance use. So you see here some of the results from studies about student assistance programs in order to be effective, what they require.

And again, a key feature of this is the network of providers. So we know that zero-tolerance policies that result in immediate expulsion or detention are not likely in being effective in helping the young person recover and move forward in terms of healthy development. And linking that young person and his or her family members to services is vitally important. And then finally, I wanted to highlight this new resource from CDC out of our Division of Adolescent and School Health about how to promote mental health and well-being in school settings. I am biased because I participated in the development of this document, but this document was informed by a rigorous review of both the literature as well as focus groups with students, with parents, with school staff including teachers and school mental health staff and community-based organizations that work in schools, so that we can be assured that what we're suggesting and recommending here is not only something that's supported by

the evidence in terms of helping kids learn skills to cope with problems and challenges that they might encounter, but also that it's feasible for schools to implement these in real-world settings.

So you see here, just to highlight a quick overview of the strategies that are included in the document, there are specific examples of programs that can be implemented within each of these categories, as well as how to address equity-related concerns within each of these and how to do it within the existing school-based infrastructure. So the link to that is at the bottom of the slide.

And then finally, I just wanted to highlight the importance of school connectedness. School connectedness, I really like to think of it as a magic wand. It's really just the feeling that students feel like they belong, that the people in the school environment, the teachers, the school staff, care about them as people, as individuals, and not just as students. There are clear things that schools can do at no or very low cost to help increase student connectedness. There's a link at the bottom of the slide that has some very concrete strategies in terms of how schools are managed, how teachers manage classrooms. There's a robust body of evidence that supports that students who feel connected to their school have lower rates of all of these risk behaviors that you see here on the slide. And importantly, this includes prescription drug misuse as well as illicit drug use. So I encourage you to check out all of these wonderful resources to help promote mental health and wellbeing and prevent substance use. Thank you very much.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Thank you so much, Marcy and Dr. Jiang. We appreciate all of that information. By way of reminder to all of our audience members, all of these resources are going out in chat and will be posted on the website and in the copy of the slide deck, which is already posted on the site.

Now it's my pleasure to introduce our next speaker. Mr. Ryan Sibbald is the Special Agent in Charge in the Special Operations Division of the Pharmaceutical, Chemical And Internet Investigation Section of the Drug Enforcement Administration. Ryan?

**Ryan Sibbald:** Thank you, Cindy. Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for allowing me to join you today to discuss this pressing issue of opioid epidemic and how it relates to youth and online access to these dangerous drugs. My name's Ryan Sibbald and I'm a special agent with the DEA.

We've already heard a little bit about the scope of the problem. Every day countless lives are lost to overdoses caused by the abuse of both prescription painkillers and other illicit drugs, specifically drug poisoning deaths are often from synthetic opioids like fentanyl, often disguised as prescription medication where they're in fact counterfeit. More and more synthetic narcotics are being created like nitazenes, a lot of them 50 times or more potent than fentanyl. They're put into pill form, but they're done in garages or dirty warehouses by people that aren't even close to being a chemist, and they're certainly not medical grade.

Americans are dying at an alarming rate. Drug poisonings are the leading cause of death for Americans, ages 18 to 45, with more than 110,000 people in the U.S. died from drug overdose poisonings in 2022, and almost 70% of these deaths were caused by fentanyl and other synthetic opioids. Among persons aged 14 to 18 years old, overdose deaths increased 94% from 2019 to 2020, and then another 20% from 2020 to 2021. Now these have gone down slightly, but these are still absolutely unacceptable.

What's even more concerning are the increasingly prevalent practice of using these social media platforms to advertise and sell these dangerous substances. The day of meeting your local drug dealer in the back alley has changed to a couple clicks of a mouse, and these dangerous substances can be delivered to one's doorstep.

I run a section at DEA headquarters element focusing on this growing concern. And we at the DEA are collaborating with many of these social media platforms to teach and empower themselves in the area of their trust and safety teams so that they can identify, target and remove the harmful content, as well as terminate the accounts violating their terms of service. We at the DEA have realized that we can't arrest our way out of this problem. It's something that we need to look at from the point of engagement and empowerment of joining public and private sectors together to address this issue affecting our youth at an exponential rate.

We're constantly engaging with these platforms. We're explaining trends, trafficking, providing them with signal in the form of keywords, terms, slang, emojis, even precursor chemical cast numbers that are making these dangerous substances. And what we're seeing out of the investigations we want to be able to train their teams, and more importantly, their AI and their machine learning to cease this behavior online.

In a recent study here at the DEA, over 98.9% of the analyzed seized M30 oxycodone pills were fake and contained synthetic opioids. We saw earlier on the slide there that over 7 out of 10 of these pills have a lethal dose. The overall arching takeaway of this is, if someone is purchasing pills or what they think to believe to be medication online, they're most likely fake and most likely lethal.

I'm not going to get into the ordering or paying or mailing of the drugs as that'll be brought up with my colleague from the Postal Inspection Service later. What we are going to talk about is the typologies that we're seeing across platforms in these investigations. So this is a Venn diagram of sorts of what we're seeing in the investigations as far as advertising and then pulling potential buyers to another platform of communication.

Typically, what we see is an end-to-end encryption to thwart efforts of law enforcement. Looking at the typologies of what we're seeing in our investigations, first and foremost, the profile seller. This is done with the actual profile itself. So when a user looks at another user, they'll clearly see that this person is selling drugs, how to contact them and what they have available.



The next is the comment seller, people posting comments and stories and reels. You have the ability to comment on other people's profiles and information that they're putting out there. What we're seeing particularly concerning are users who are struggling or trying to combat an addictive issue that they have, and these bad actors are capitalizing on that. And then the screen on the bottom right, in the black, you can see this person was talking about how they missed Xanax and this other bad actor kindly goes ahead and puts a link in there so that they can easily access and recommend other dealers that can produce or provide these substances.

The direct messaging seller, this is where you might see a comment or a post or a group posting and people will reach out directly into those DMs, and that's stuff that's not public. That's stuff that you can't see. And that's something that law enforcement is unable to access without a search warrant or court order.

And it's growing exponentially of concern because these platforms are largely going end-to-end encrypted, and they're not going to have the capability, and law enforcement will not be able to access this. And that's true for both drugs, for counter-terrorism and child sexual abuse material that's happening on these online platforms as well.

We also have the link seller. So within these profiles and they're talking, these people can offer a link to pull them off platform or to a private market, if you will. And this is distinction not to be confused with the dark web or dark net market. These are still open source clear net, but people can go there and select the kind of drugs that they want and go through the end process. Also, includes online pharmacies which is also a growing concern. We're seeing this, QR codes. QR codes are everywhere. People are very accustomed to them. People are getting more and more blatant with this recently. You'll see them putting on stickers and people can scan those and go to a direct contact for that end sale.

And finally, you have the private or public group seller. So these are specialized groups that you even have to be invited to or referred to by another, and it's a safe place that they think that they can offer up the information for sale, provide pricing, contact information, and these are all across most of these big social media companies that are out there.

Video content seller is the final... Those are your TikTok videos, your short little ones, and they embed a series of either text or emojis or some sort of indication of what they have for sale and then offer it to an off platform for the end sale.

It's not all doom and gloom. There's a ton of resources that are out there to include. Attempts that public and private sectors are bridging gaps that have never been attempted before. U.S. government and law enforcement are taking these issues very seriously. We're committed to vital resources and addressing and actioning on these. There's a ton of school resources for school practitioners. There's parent toolkits and talking points to start that important conversation with your child. And of course, there's ample information to provide to the youth with factual data and examples so that they can hopefully

make healthy decisions and choices in the future. Thank you for your time and turning it back over to you, Cindy.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Brian, thank you so much for that overview of what's going on the web and the different ways in which folks are accessing or gaining access to our young people, and enabling them to access medications and drugs online. You can see you're getting lots of emoji responses there. Audience, thank you so much for your continued interaction. We greatly appreciate that.

Now I'd like to welcome to the stage Mr. Kyle Rau, who is the Program Manager of Dark Web and Online Investigations in the Contraband Interdiction and Investigations Program at the United States Postal Inspection Service. Kyle?

**Kyle Rau:** Good afternoon everyone, and again, I appreciate having the opportunity to speak with you today. I think the thing that we're going to hear as an overarching conversation today is that this is something that we cannot do as an independent agency, as a U.S. government or as practitioners. So I think this is one of the unique things that's affecting us as a country that we have to work together, and that's where we work hand in hand with our partners in DEA and other resources to help to better effectuate these kinds of things.

Again, having the opportunity to speak with you today is very important to us as I don't think a lot of people understand or even know of the U.S. Postal Inspection Service. Our main goal and our main focus is ultimately protecting the mail. And this is the unique thing that happened in the early two 2000s with the advent of the dark web, and virtual currency I'm going to talk about real briefly, is that this movement away from having to meet up in person to have illicit substances sent or to receive them, but now they're actually being able to be delivered right to a person's residence. And the scary part and that we're trying to work through here is, how do we keep these out of our children's hands when they have direct access to these things?

So as I indicated before, and we've talked about this, the idea that we can look at one specific area and understand what's going on I think is the difficult aspect of this. We're talking about social media platforms. We're talking about dark web platforms. And each one of those is independent of themselves, but they're also overlapping. As we know, unfortunately, those that are trying to sell the illegal substances are not just targeting one specific location. They're trying to get to the largest mass possible, and so what we're finding is that these individuals are going across all these different platforms. So to be able to target just one specific location is not going to effectuate this problem. And as my colleague from DEA said, "We've realized as a government that this is not a problem that we're going to arrest our way out of." So it is finding these consortiums like this program here today to... How do we find a holistic approach and get the information to those that can best utilize this?

And ultimately, it's into the hands of the parents because they're the ones that are seeing what their children are dealing with. And so it's educating them and

showing them what they need to see to help us better understand, and get that partnership and then reaching back out with us.

So we've talked about online marketplaces. And again, I'm trying to share some of the different images so that I hope you as educators or as individuals who are working in this, that we can pass along this information to parents and having the parents... And I think the biggest thing we can teach them is that to interact and communicate with their kids and see what they're doing. If they're seeing logos like this on their computers, if they're seeing it on their smartphones that this should be a telltale sign that something else is happening.

And two I'll point out here. In the bottom right-hand corner is something called Tor, which is the predominant form in a way that individuals are going to get access to what we're calling the dark web, which is a subset of the internet. And the one right above that called Tails.

And so these are the type of images that, if you see on the computer screen or on the cell phone, should be big indicators to have that conversation that they're not interacting with what we would consider the normal internet.

And again, this crosses over into the fact that the internet communication, as my colleague from DEA had mentioned, is that it's not happening in one situation. They're catching them or interacting with them in one location and moving to another one, whether it be encrypted emails, instant messaging and mobile applications, it's cross platforming. And so we can't just look at it as being a single source. And so if we know one area and we neglect the others, we're going to miss a big aspect of this.

Again, a lot of this is just knowing where to look and that's the helpful part. Hopefully, we can take away from today is showing you some of the different things to be cognizant of, and then using the resources that you're going to hear from the panelists and the experts in this area of the prevention side of it.

So it's identifying it and then matching that up with how do we prevent and educate our youth to realize what this is. And I think Ryan from DEA brought up a great point that a lot of these illicit substances that even teens are thinking are pharmaceutical level, are not. It's being laced with the harmful fentanyl, which is why we're seeing that unfortunate level of death in children because it's not pharmaceutical level.

Again, we're talking about the different things. As you mentioned earlier, you're using internet and these are the different encrypted communications that you're going to see used. The hard part is there is a lot of legitimate use for some of these encrypted communication apps but this is that bridge that needs to be covered with our youth, and that is engaging. Why are they using these particular apps? So it is really having that conversation.

This is just a pointer, and if you're seeing these types of apps, it's probably a good place to have that communication with the youth as to, "Why are you using that app and for what purpose?" Because it really goes together in that aspect of it.

A lot of these are the symbols that you would see on a cell phone or on a desktop, and it's just a clue to have a further conversation. It's not that illegal activity is always happening but, again, is an indicator that should force us to want to have further communications with that.

We talked about the engagement with our social media platforms. And I think this is the benefit where we sit today versus years ago, is that we're having conducive conversations with the social media platforms. And they really care about this so they're really engaged with the U.S. government in helping us target these different areas and want to take down those profiles that are identified as having the illegal activities.

The last aspect I wanted to touch base on when we talk about this is the virtual currency aspect, and how are kids or our youth paying for these things? This is that disconnect sometimes that we as older adults don't realize the virtual currency aspect of what it looks like. Again, I'm trying to show you some of the images that relate to Bitcoin or virtual currency wallets that you might see. This is probably one of the most predominant ways that payment is being done through this because it's anonymous through the social media platforms, through the online platform.

So how do they make those payments? So the biggest way that kids are doing that is through the virtual currency, through different things that you're seeing here as well as some of the online payment platforms. The best part here is we're having great engagement with these companies and explaining to them how it's being illegally used. And they're doing a great job of trying to combat it themselves, as we fight through this epidemic.

We're also going to see these mobile wallets so it's what you're seeing versus on the web versus a person's mobile phone. So again, the idea is engaging in that conversation. If we see these things, what are the resources that we can have? And ultimately, this is a great opportunity with the panelists that are going to follow us here, have some great resources with regards to that.

Lastly, what I want to out is unfortunately these individuals are exploiting the U.S. Mail, and this is another area that we would encourage mentors, you know, parents, teachers to be aware on. And it is hard to understand because these are small packages. They do a great job of trying to make it look like traditional business mail or things that we would order online and those kinds of things. They do a great job of hiding that.

But again, I think ultimately this always comes back to the overarching topic that I've talked about here today is understanding what is going on and if you're

seeing those things engaging in the conversation about what was being ordered. But ultimately these packages are showing up. If it doesn't seem to make sense I think the best thing we can take away from this is that, if it doesn't make sense to you, your family or what would be normal, that's the indicator that we need to delve further in using the resources and having those conversations today.

But I can tell you that from Chief Barksdale to the Postmaster General Louis DeJoy, this has always been and has been a top priority of us to work towards removing the illegal substances from the mail, and working with our counterparts to better understand how can we remove this so ultimately we work towards the safety of our youth.

Lastly, I will just highlight some of the great work that we're doing as U.S. government both in the United States and around the world. Last year we did a operation targeting online and dark web vendors, which was named Operation SpecTor. You can see some of the stats that came out of that. And again, this was a worldwide effort to take down, and ultimately had, 288 dark net drug traffickers arrested around the world. So like I said, ultimately, we're not going to arrest our way out of this, but if we can show that we have concerted effort both within the U.S. government as well as our international counterparts, hopefully these are the kind of aspects that make people realize that even though there's a level of anonymity online, it is not always there. So with that, I know my time has expired and I'll turn it back over to Cindy. Thank you.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Kyle, thank you so much for all of that information. And also for showing some nice examples of things that folks can look for on phones and on computer monitors and on laptops, so that we know if we see these things we can initiate those conversations. Again, lots of applause and lots of responses here to this presentation.

It is now my pleasure to transition us into our panel discussion, and I'd like to welcome now Ms. Helen Hernandez, who's the Assistant Director of Drug-Free Communities program in the Office of National Drug Control Policy, and who also helped to plan this webinar today. And Helen is going to moderate our panel. Helen?

**Helen Hernandez:** Thank you, Cindy. Hello and welcome. I want to thank our presenters for the wealth of information that they've shared with us at the top of today's webinar. They did an excellent job context setting for us and helping us lead into this next section of our webinar today, where we'll be having a conversation with five panelists that will share their insights for how they are promoting safety on the ground.

And so please join me in welcoming Dr. Michael Rich, Ms. Michelle Rincon, Ms. Lisa Sadillo-White, Mr. Carlos Briano, and Dr. Katherine Meurer. And you can visit the event webpage to read their biographies, but let's go ahead and jump right into the conversation.

So I'm going to go ahead and get started with Dr. Rich, if that's okay with you? I would like to ask you, Dr. Rich, if you can share a little bit of an overview on what is digital wellness and how teaching students digital wellness practices might help them avoid engaging and accessing drugs, and enter this culture that exist online?

**Michael Rich:**

Thank you for having me. At The Digital Wellness Lab at Boston Children's Hospital in Harvard Medical School, we define digital wellness as "an intentional state of physical, mental, and social health that occurs with mindful engagement in the continuous digital physical environment." I say that as a single environment because that's what kids live in. They move seamlessly between the two. Us old people see them as two environments, but they do not.

This comes from a mindful and critical consumption and creation of screen media that is responsible to the world, and respectful of others and of themselves. This means bringing their full adolescent skepticism, and they've got plenty of that, to bear on the content by asking questions such as, "Who created and distributed this? What did they want viewers to do? If I do this, how will I and others be affected by it? How and what does this communicate to different cultures, races, religions, sexualities, and gender identities. Finally, specific to the issue of substance use, we need to take a page from our successful playbook on reducing tobacco smoking and have the youth speak so their peers listen describing substance use not as unhealthy because they know they're going to live forever or dangerous because that's badass and cool, but, to use their words, stupid.

**Helen Hernandez:**

You're exactly right. Dr. Rich, thank you so much for that. Youth engagement is the best practice that we are also seeing and trying to amplify amongst community coalitions and substance use prevention professionals. Have the youth carry that message for us. And so in addition to digital wellness approaches, we know that there are repositories for evidence-based prevention, such as blueprints for healthy youth development. And we know that the DEA has a wealth of information to help us in our communities raise awareness. And so I know they have a drug prevention curricula and some approaches. And so Michelle, could you describe some of the elements of the DEA curriculum and what attracted you to it?

**Michelle Rincon:**

Absolutely. Thank you again for also having me here. We're excited to be here. The Operation Prevention Curriculum is an educational initiative and it's a national health and science standards-aligned program for young people ages 8 to 18. Operation Prevention is an award-winning educational program that is evidence-informed, science-based and created in collaboration with DEA and discovery education. Other than being dedicated to preventing substance misuse in schools, the program comes down to helping young people make healthy informed decisions at a very young age. For example, our opioid and prescription drugs elementary school resource focuses on how medications work in our body and why it is important to use medications responsibly. Our middle school lesson from this resource focuses on the human body,

endorphins, and why specific substances have the effect they do on the body and create specific sensations in the body. The curriculum also has culture-based resources or what we call the Good Medicine Bundle, where educators can pick and choose certain lessons or elements of the curriculum and teach that to elementary or middle school age students.

The Good Medicine Bundle brings knowledge to elementary students about gratitude, finding balance and the emotions we experience because we do have to remember that we're dealing with maybe little bodies, young people, little people with sometimes very, very big emotions. For example, no emotion is bad, but however, unmanaged emotions can cause people to make unhealthy decisions and feel out of harmony. So making these healthy decisions and choosing to use medication responsibly may help connect students' understanding of balance and wellness to avoid reliance on opioids or other substances. Educators also have the option to take middle school and high school students on virtual field trips, which is very, very cool to do as well. These videos teach students to use knowledge they gain and make healthy decisions to become leaders for prevention in their communities. The operation prevention curriculum and resources are free and are available online at [operationprevention.com](http://operationprevention.com) and available in English and in Spanish.

**Helen Hernandez:** That's excellent, Michelle. So many of the things you mentioned I resonate with as a mom. I understand little ones with big feelings. I'm sure many of our educators on watching us today also resonate with that. But something you brought to my attention that I regularly share with our prevention specialists is that culture is a critical component of prevention. And so I'm really happy you mentioned that because it's so important that there's not a one size fits all approach and that we're really tailoring our prevention interventions. And so Dr. Rich, can you share a little bit of an overview of digital wellness curriculum and some of the guides that might be helpful for our educators, our school districts watching us today?

**Michael Rich:** Two that I know fairly well. One is called Screenshots, which came out of the Manchester New Hampshire Public Schools and the Digital Wellness Lab helped evaluate. And then there is actually I think a commercial product called Real Media, which is a much more in-depth look at drug use through the lens of digital wellness.

**Helen Hernandez:** Thank you so much for sharing that. From our experience, our educators or school districts have so much on their plates and we understand that it can be a challenge to really implement some of these prevention programming in schools. So can I ask Lisa and Carlos, what were some of the first steps you all took to get this curriculum into the Albuquerque Public School system? Can you share a little bit about that experience?

**Lisa Sedillo-White:** Sure. Thank you, Helen. In 2022, the New Mexico Keep NM Alive Campaign in the state of New Mexico was formed by Bernalillo County and the city of Albuquerque to bring awareness and education and combating the fentanyl epidemic plaguing our communities, including creating a Keep NM Alive website

with information related to fentanyl. In that creation of the Keep NM Alive campaign, we established key partnerships, service providers, both on behavioral health and the addiction side, judicial, New Mexico State Department, partnerships with the Department of Health, also local hospitals and lived experience groups in addition to the Albuquerque Public Schools as a partner. And we also created partnerships with law enforcement, which included local and federal. And in that partnership with the DEA, what we determined was there were a lot of resources. We were educated on operation prevention in addition to receiving training from the DEA, train the trainer on One Pill Can Kill to help us with our community outreach.

So with that being said, knowing all of the resources available through all of our partners and what our goal was and recognizing the operation prevention materials that were there, that were free to educational institutions, I wanted to connect Albuquerque Public Schools which was a vital partner in our community outreach and the Drug Enforcement Administration. So with the ultimate goal of expanding outreach to our youth and also to our school leaders, myself and the Bernalillo County manager, we reached out to the superintendent of Albuquerque Public Schools to schedule a lunch to see if he would be interested and he would the buy-in for having this discussion with the Drug Enforcement Administration. So we then scheduled a meeting with the Drug Enforcement Administration and Albuquerque Public Schools, Dr. Meurer and her staff. And we then started the conversation and our goal was to help the DEA promote operation prevention because of all the resources that were available. So it was just connecting the resources to our valuable partnerships. And Carlos, if you want to add to that.

**Carlos Briano:**

Yes, ma'am. So I was a high school teacher for eight years and I had the privilege of being a finalist for Texas Teacher of the Year in 2013. So I made the false assumption that every superintendent that I spoke to or school board that I spoke to was going to say, "Of course, bring it to our district. You are a believer in it, therefore we are as well." I was very incorrect in my assertion, it was not that easy. I did not take into account stigma behind substance use, medication misuse. I did not take into account anti-police sentiment sometimes, especially concerning the DEA. So without partnerships like Lisa Sedillo-White, who is with the county, it was difficult. It took a tribe to get into the... It still takes a tribe to get into the school district sometimes. So rather than taking the initial approach of approaching district leadership and school boards, I started having conversations with principals and telling them that our curriculum is a la carte and they can use it at the school level if they want.

I started having conversations with teachers because when I became a teacher, I thought I was going to have to instruct about journalism. That was my subject, how to write a lead, how to use a camera, how to use InDesign to do a layout. I didn't know I was going to have to have conversations about nutrition, about dating, about substance use. So this tool speaking one-on-one with a teacher, this is a tool you have when inevitably you're going to have to have a conversation with your student about substance use. So that's the approach I



took. I changed it from not only speaking to leadership of the district, I started talking to principals and at a ground-to-level with individual teachers.

**Helen Hernandez:** Thank you so much. Well, common themes here, partnership, and I really enjoyed, Carlos, your story about how you were an educator for journalism for one subject, and then here you were tossed into having to speak on something a little bit different than you were expecting. Dr. Rich, what might some of the first steps be for schools that are looking to integrate digital wellness education into the academic day?

**Michael Rich:** Well, limiting it to digital wellness education, first of all, digital wellness education begins with digital literacy. The ability to critically view digital media, determine its validity. Does this make sense with what I know of the world? Inject a little cognitive dissonance, say and be skeptical and examine its content from multiple perspectives, often with others in discussion. Second, as parents and family members, we should be teaching digital literacy in developmentally optimal ways to children from the moment they begin to use digital media. And I do mean those babies with the iPad that the parents show off can make the cow go moo.

I think we have to help them navigate this environment thoughtfully, mindfully, and in a balanced way right from the get-go. And a big part of that frankly, is we as parents need to model the behavior we want to see in our kids. Finally, I think we should not treat digital literacy as an elective add-on in schools. If there is something to be taught, if there's space in the curriculum or time to teach it. But since we now obtain the vast majority of all information through digital media, literate consumption and creation of that information must be infused in every subject taught in schools.

**Helen Hernandez:** That's a great suggestion. Having that digital literacy be a part of the academic day. So I wanted to ask Dr. Meurer and Michelle, you all also took some steps to get that buy-in to implement that DEA curriculum in your school. Can you talk to us a little bit about that?

**Kristine Meurer:** Yeah, I'll go ahead and start. And I'm Kris Meurer. I'm the executive director for Student Family Community Supports division for Albuquerque Public Schools. And Albuquerque Public Schools is a very large school district. We're like 38th in the nation in terms of how large we are. So getting things put into APS is not simple. And I want to echo a little bit about what Lisa and Carlos both said. We have partnered with the county for years way before the fentanyl was happening and way before... We have ongoing partners with the Bernalillo County because we are basically the school district in Bernalillo County. And so we partner a lot with them on many things. So when the Keep New Mexico Alive came up, we were totally on board. We implement that the data that you saw presented earlier, and so we were on board with that partnership and then Lisa did the right thing.

She went to our superintendent. But typically what happens, and especially in large school districts, superintendent picks who's in charge of that stuff and

says, "Take care of this and see if it's something that's worth happening in APS." Another thing to know about New Mexico is that health education is a graduation requirement in New Mexico, and so it's taught in all of our high schools and in APS we also have a required course in middle school. And so we surveyed our health educators around health topics and what they wanted professional development on, and not surprisingly, number one was substance use and abuse. That came up astoundingly as number one with mental health being number two. And both of those are so closely related. So we began to think, what can we do? And then all of a sudden, I think the stars really aligned is what I'm trying to say.

So they aligned and we got the opportunity to have the meeting with the DEA. I actually was part of the Keep New Mexico Alive, so I was familiar with what was happening with the DEA but wasn't familiar with the curriculum. And we set up the meeting and I think that it sort of began to roll from there. Our partnership certainly isn't over. We're getting ready to actually train all of our health educators next week. So we're very excited about that. The DEA and Discovery Ed are both coming out to do a training for our health educators so that we can begin to implement this. And then next year we're going to probably figure out how we move this down into the elementary level, which will be a little bit more difficult because we don't have licensed health educators in the elementary. So it's going to be a little bit harder for sale, but I think we've got the partnership in place to make this happen.

**Michelle Rincon:**

Thank you, Dr. Meurer. I mean, I feel like she covered it all, but as far as what she said and what Carlos said when he answered his question, I'm pretty sure that they covered it all. However, I mean, I know Albuquerque Public Schools is a success story, but there are still so many other public schools, private charter schools in New Mexico and in West Texas. I can tell you what we're doing now to try and reach those specific school campuses. So DEA Community Outreach would not be as successful as it is without its community partners, and there's proof of that right now.

Right in this webinar for APS, we had the amazing help of Ms. Sedillo-White and then Dr. Meurer, her openness and APS's openness as well. For other schools like the ones located in Southern New Mexico, our New Mexico National Guard Joint Counter Task Force is helping us make strides and getting to those schools we have not yet reached out to. So these partnerships are just so, so important to DEA, and we definitely cherish them because we know the great potential and value they have to help us bridge those gaps between community and law enforcement.

**Helen Hernandez:**

Partnership continues to be that common theme and how important that is in order to implement these programmings or raising awareness in our schools with the support. And I think that's the important part, making sure that it's not just on our educators or our school districts, but really we're all carrying the load to try to promote healthy, well-rounded and learning environments for our students. So Dr. Rich, I want to go back to you for a second. Can you provide us some more details about one or two digital awareness practices? I really

enjoyed hearing you talk about digital literacy. Could you talk a little bit about two digital wellness practices that might support students' ability to be more critical when evaluating some of that online media they may be encountering on their phones?

**Michael Rich:**

Well, I just finished a 400-page book and you're cutting me down to two things. But I would say first of all, this is a whole family and whole community effort. This is not something that we just sort of lay on the kids at home. I talk about the three Ms that parents should model the online behaviors they want to see in their kids, that they should mentor them, which means each time that they get a device or a platform or an application to sit down with them and do it with them. A lot of parents resist that because they don't feel as smart as the kids in that environment. But mentorship goes both ways. You teach and you learn on both sides of this phenomenon. And it's a great way to share time with your kids too. Otherwise, they're just checked out on the screen and finally to be able to monitor their online behavior.

Now both parents and kids push back against this because the parents say, "I don't have the time to see everything she does." And the kids of course say, "I want my privacy." Although as you well know, to a 13-year-old, privacy means only so mom and dad can't see. The rest of the world they're oblivious to. But because parents have usernames and passwords and they can monitor them, the kid's behavior usually improves. It's sort of like drug testing in the workplace. I think that in terms of really following this, we've got to let the kids lead each other, peer leadership in digital wellness. Harness that natural adolescent skepticism of what they're told, not just of what they're told by parents and teachers, but also what they're told by the online influencers and peer leadership also in drug awareness. Again, this is what worked with tobacco smoking. Harness their natural drive to be healthy, their adolescent altruism for others and their desire to be in the face of those guys who are trying to make money off them.

**Helen Hernandez:**

Those are great. Those are great resources and suggestions. I was writing down natural altruism for others and here at the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, you mentioned influencers. We're also using influencers with the real deal on fentanyl campaign to get the word out and use influencers to do that messaging for us, much like what you said earlier, harness that young person who really wants to be a peer to their colleagues and friends. So I know our time's running up, but I do want to ask all of you one last question and so I wanted to ask, how are you or how might you engage young people in working with their peers on prevention interventions or digital wellness or raising awareness about the dangers that exist? So Dr. Rich, did you want to kick us off?

**Michael Rich:**

I'll continue my theme. Let them lead, right? Ask them what they need and what they think their peers need and then cut them loose on their peers, right? Because they're going to listen to each other far more than they listen to us.

**Helen Hernandez:**

Thank you for that.

Dr. Meurer?

**Kristine Meurer:**

So one thing I wanted to say, one of the best things about this program is that it's free. And that was the biggest selling point. No, just kidding. It wasn't the biggest selling point, but it was certainly a selling point and talking about partnerships and peers, one of the programs that the county funds for in APS is called Peer Educators. And so we have peer educators in several of our schools and they focus on both suicide prevention, substance abuse, and so they are the peer leaders in their schools. They are trained in how to recognize and how to refer and to work directly with their peers. And they also, as part of that funding, have to do a school community project every semester. And those projects have ranged from all types of things, but I know that some of them taken on some of the hard topics around substance abuse.

And so they are taking the lead in this. In addition, Albuquerque Public Schools have what we call Crossroad Counselors, which are in all of our high schools and they are substance abuse and use school counselors. And so they're licensed school counselors and that's their role. And so they are also coming to the training next week and are being trained side by side with our health educators. And they are in our schools and all of them are in our schools. So they will be looking at how do we engage youth to take the proactive positive approach to substance abuse prevention, and how they might influence their peers.

**Carlos Briano:**

When I started with DEA in 2020, I couldn't meet a young person that had been affected by a fentanyl related death. It was rare. Now it's every day, I meet a young person who's lost a cousin, a classmate, a teammate. And so when I talk to them, and it's usually in the context of giving a presentation on fentanyl. And so at the end, I challenge them to volunteer, to be trained by us to do the presentation themselves. Because as educators, we know that peer-to-peer instruction is way more effective than teacher to student instruction.

So I commend DEA headquarters, starting with our administrator, Anne Milgram, to open up the one pill can kill information, our slides, our publications to the world, and asking them Join us because right here, Michelle and Carlos, that's half of the outreach team for the whole El Paso division. And we have to cover the whole state of New Mexico and 17 counties of West Texas. But when we start training other people, including young people, to do the same awareness campaign, it just creates wonderful synergy.

And I tell the young people who are hurting from the loss of their loved one or their friend or their classmate or teammate, turn that pain into positivity. That's what a lot of parents do, that's what a lot of siblings do. Bring in that inner strength young person and turn that pain into positivity. Because that lived experience is going to resonate way louder than when a DEA person gives the message.

**Helen Hernandez:**

Michelle, did you want to go next?

**Michelle Rincon:** Sure. Of course. Thank you. So the importance of spreading our prevention message across the board to many different eyes and ears is crucial to DEA. We encourage young people to engage with their peers every time we lead a presentation, every time we have a booth for a career day fair, or when they're asking us questions about our jobs. So we share with them that this message, the message of prevention or of how one pill can kill is a lifesaving message. And that it should be shared with their friends and their families.

DEA community outreach also has websites specifically tailored to young people where they can learn more about the harmful effects of drug use, and read about other peers in other parts of the nation who have struggled with substance use disorders. That website, in case anyone is interested, it's called or it's [justthinktwice.com](http://justthinktwice.com). And we also have a [campusdrugprevention.gov](http://campusdrugprevention.gov) which focuses preventing drug misuse among college students.

**Helen Hernandez:** Thank you for that, Michelle. How about you, Lisa?

**Lisa Sedillo-White:** Ditto. A lot of what my peers have said that I think what's very, very important, is to engage our youth. As Dr. Rich stated, it is important for them to be the voice, and so we engage youth advocacy groups to be involved in planning. If we're planning, like we're planning a fentanyl education summit in October, so we want to engage youth. Substance abuse training, we want to engage youth and empower them and educate them. And have them, as Michelle was saying, have them go out and be the voice. Because youth are going to listen to youth before they listen to an adult. And it also helps build their confidence and their leadership skills. So, I believe in education and empowerment for our youth.

**Helen Hernandez:** Love that, education and empowerment. That's wonderful. So of course, I want to be sensitive to our time and respectful of everybody's time. So panelists, thank you all so much for sharing your insight as to how you are implementing raising awareness prevention initiatives in your communities and across the country.

I heard from you all, I got some takeaways from what you all shared. One of them was youth led, adult guided is probably one of the best approaches to implementing and raising awareness in our community so that we can build resilient kids. Having and supporting and empowering, Lisa, like you said, those young people to carry out the messages is really important. So I took that as one of our takeaways, as well as partnership.

And so I definitely want to make sure that anyone on the webinar doesn't feel as if they have to do this on their own. There are lots of resources out there. There are other stakeholders in your communities. There are resources at the federal level to support the efforts you are trying to carry out in your communities. I have the honor and privilege of overseeing something called the Drug-Free Community Support Program. But there are hundreds of community coalitions that are funded out of this office that are implementing evidence-based prevention interventions.

And so I would encourage anyone who's feeling like they don't know where to go, to of course, access the resources that have been shared today and through this webinar. But also reach out to those DFC funded community coalitions across the country who are trying to do this work. And doing it in various capacities across the country. I want to thank you all again for your time, and I'm going to pass it on to Cindy.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Yes, thank you so very much. You all were amazing and all of those icons we're coming up the right side of our screen. We are going to bring our panelists back and all of our speakers back in just a minute. We wanted to formally close the content delivery segment of the webinar. And we want to do that first by thanking each of you, our audience members, for all of those icons, the questions that have been rolling in, and for your active attention and participation. Thank you for that.

We also want to remind you that there are several places that you can go for resources, including the resources from this website, by going to the NCSSE website. There's also information at the Best Practices Clearinghouse where you can gain more access and more information as well. Finally, we want to make sure that you're all aware of the various webinars that we have coming up. We are really working hard to keep all kinds of content coming to you.

Next week, we have a human trafficking and anti-trafficking and anti-exploitation strategies for vulnerable youth coming up. That would be next Wednesday. And then in April, we launch our gun violence prevention miniseries. April 10th focuses on prevention, the 24th on intervention and response, the eighth on recovery and protection, and the 22nd on focusing in on emergency operations plans.

Now there is another thing I want to just make you aware of, based on this conversation, that our planning group is looking at planning another webinar focusing in on youth engagement and peer prevention within schools. And so, we're hoping to have a lot of young people who are actively doing this work coming into that webinar to share their experiences with all of you. So please keep an eye out for that announcement, which will be happening late summer, early fall.

I'd like to also ask each of you before you log off today, to take a minute to click the link for our feedback form. We use these feedback forms to create content that you are asking us for. So it's really important for us to hear from you. And hear how this particular webinar was for you and any other questions or topics that you might be interested in.

And now I'd like to go ahead and invite our speakers and panelists to bring their webcams back up. And let's go ahead and tackle some of the questions that have been coming into the Q&A. There's a lot of them, so we're not going to get to all of them, but we'll get to as many as we can. We're going to keep these responses brief but concise and full of good information.

I'd like to begin with one that's going to go out to Carlos and Dr. Rich. And this is the question about, are there any additional code words, emojis, texts, or other communications that adults might be looking for in their young peoples on their phones and their computers? Carlos, can we start with you and then we'll bounce over to Dr. Rich?

**Carlos Briano:** Yeah. So I'll say two things real quick. If you go to [dea.gov/onepill](http://dea.gov/onepill), there's resources there for educators, for caregivers. Pick the one that applies to you and one of those resources is an emoticon decoder sheet. Now, I will say, and this is from DEA Intelligence and DEA Operations, but I will say as a former teacher, the moment the adults get wind of what the acronyms are and the codes are, the kids are going to adapt and change. But the point of the sheet is to start an important conversation with your loved ones, especially your young ones, about how dealers are communicating on these platforms. And those are just an example to use.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Excellent.

**Carlos Briano:** So, go to download it at [dea.gov/onepill](http://dea.gov/onepill).

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Excellent. Thank you so much, Carlos. And Dr. Rich, what would you add to that?

**Michael Rich:** I would agree with that. And one of the disappointments always is that no matter whenever you make a list, it's about half obsolete by the time it hits the airwaves, if you will. Because not just the kids, but the sellers are very nimble, very aware of this, and want to stay in a dark place, if you will. But I sent two links in, one for emojis and one for slang that I think are as comprehensive as can be. But be aware that again, go to the kids, ask them. They know better than us and before us. I think that's really, really important to understand, that this is a movable feast.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Thank you so much for that. For sure. And those resources did go out into the chat, for those of you who are monitoring your chat. Thank you very much for those responses. Michelle, I think this is going to be a relatively quick response, but it's a question that comes out to you specifically. Somebody in our audience was wondering if they could find somebody local from the DEA who might come and speak at their school. We've got that coming up a couple of times actually.

**Michelle Rincon:** Absolutely, yes. So the Community Outreach Specialist, it's a fairly new position to DEA. If they go to [dea.gov/divisions](http://dea.gov/divisions), a big map should pop up. If they click where they are located in their states, it should take them to that division's webpage. And it should tell them who is in charge of community outreach for that division and their area of responsibility.

Now, once they do that, they can go ahead email, then call them, depending on who is in that roster. And they should be taken care of. But yes, everyone should have or almost should have a community outreach specialist, which is very exciting to have one in every division.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** That's excellent. Thank you so very much. Now this question is going out generally, it's not specifically focused on one speaker here. But somebody in our audience asks about any additional questions that schools should be asking young people on surveys around accessing substances online. Does anybody want to try to do a response to that? Questions to be asking youth on surveys around online substance use access.

**Michael Rich:** I can give you some example, both from patients that I've seen but also from the other side. A lot of stuff is done on Snapchat because those images disappear eventually. And what they do is they put the images up and attract the kid, but send them to the dark web from there. So Snapchat isn't actually selling fentanyl, but it is giving them a link when they show their interest to fentanyl on the dark web.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Thank you, Dr. Rich. And Dr. Meurer, did you have other ideas for how to survey young people in the schools? Go ahead.

**Kristine Meurer:** If your school district is not doing the YRBS, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey, I would highly recommend that you do it. There's lots of questions in there about substance use and abuse and also other risk behaviors that youth are partaking in. And I know that CDC will probably be looking at additional questions coming up around digital information and not just... There's stuff in there about digital bullying already, so there's already things in there. So, that would be something that if your school district is not doing that, there is both a middle and a high school version of the Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

And we do it in Albuquerque, we over sample and get actually building level data. So every one of our schools gets their own information about what their youth are doing. And it's an anonymous survey and it's very well done. So I would highly recommend that you look at that survey. And if your district isn't doing it, start talking to people and figure out how you get them involved in doing that survey.

**Michael Rich:** I would also add to it that what you get from the CDC is sort of a core YRBS. And you are allowed to add questions that are unique to your population, to concerns you have. Because obviously, different parts of the states have different issues. So, don't be shy about making it your own.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** That's a great suggestion, to be able to do that broad data collection that Dr. Meurer, you mentioned, and Dr. Rich, that idea of making it your own and reflect your community more closely.

**Kristine Meurer:** And because it's a national survey, you can do comparisons with the rest of your state, with other districts across the nation, and other states across the nation.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Wonderful, thank you. And Marci, I saw you come up. I also saw you put something in chat. Did you want to speak to this?



**Marci Hertz:** Yes, thank you so much. So just to echo what my colleagues have said-

**Michael Rich:** Since we're talking about you.

**Marci Hertz:** Yes, I was trying to put things in the chat, but I don't think I can chat to everyone, just the panelists. But thank you to my colleagues for the plug. Yes, the Youth Risk Behavior Survey is in public and private schools, among middle and high school students.

And just as was noted, you can also add questions to the core. They provide a list of optional questions that other jurisdictions have added, but you are certainly have flexibility to add ones of your own as well. We are actually in the process of working to ballot with YRBS coordinators who vote on the questions, at least one question for the core related to fentanyl. So, we are trying to stay abreast of the times. But yes, it provides very important trend data and has all of the other benefits that you've already heard discussed here. And for those who are concerned about questions that are on the YRBS that they think would be problematic in your jurisdiction, you also have the flexibility of removing some questions. So, just want to note that as well. Thank you.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Thank you so much, Marci. All right, here's a question again, to the group. We're just going to get one or two responses to this one. Does anybody know of any trainings that are offered to young people who might want to become peer educators? And if you know of the trainings or their specific requirements that they might have? Anybody know of any peer educator youth trainings?

**Kristine Meurer:** I don't know of any that are offered nationally, but we worked very closely with our Public Department of Health in New Mexico, as we trained our peer educators. And there is a peer educator training that they utilized. And I can try to find out. And I know that that was sort of national. And then they came and actually did the training for our peer educators. So I know there's stuff out there, but it was already here and available to us so we didn't have to research a lot of it and do that training.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** And that's in New Mexico, Dr. Meurer, right?

**Kristine Meurer:** That's in New Mexico. Our New Mexico Department of Health, they had a peer educator program that was sort of statewide for a while, and then their funding went away. But then the county funded us, Albuquerque public schools, but we use that same training.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Okay, excellent. Thank you. Now, I saw Carlos and I think Helen. Carlos, you want to go first?

**Carlos Briano:** Yeah, I'll just echo what I said earlier, that we offer Train the Trainers. So, we can train young people who then can train other young people to deliver our one pill can kill messaging. We also have THC presentations because use has gone up for marijuana, cannabis among young people in New Mexico and West

Texas. So, we do those as well. You just got to reach out to me or Michelle and we'll be happy to do that training in New Mexico or West Texas. And then Michelle mentioned all the other community outreach people throughout the country. I'm sure they would rise to the challenge to do Train the Trainers as well.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Excellent. Thank you. And Helen, did you have something that you wanted to put in there?

**Helen Hernandez:** I did. I wanted to make two shameless plugs here. So, the program that I mentioned earlier that I have the honor and privilege of overseeing is called Drug-Free Communities. And we have 751 community coalitions that are receiving funding through our office to do and implement evidence-based prevention interventions. Many of those 751 coalitions, if not all, have youth coalitions. Because we're seeing that as a best practice, as was shared by all our panelists, that youth are the ones that are more effectively carrying out our prevention messaging.

And so if you go to [whitehouse.gov/ondcp](http://whitehouse.gov/ondcp), you'll find on that webpage a listing of all our community coalitions that are receiving funding. You could begin by just googling those in your state or reaching out to them. Because they are always seeking opportunities to engage with young people and to have them be a part of the work that we're doing. So, that would be my first recommendation. Reach out to those DFCs. We have DFCs in all 50 states and our U.S. territories, so I would encourage you to start there.

And then another organization that is training youth to be prevention messages, specifically when it comes to substance use, is called CADCA. And they are Coalition Development Support Team, they're advocacy focused, and so I would encourage you to visit [cadca.org](http://cadca.org), C-A-D-C-A .org, and look at their youth leadership initiative. They host two meetings on an annual basis that have a youth component.

And again, it's not that these young people are being prepared to just remain within the substance use prevention field, although we would absolutely welcome them, given our workforce issues. But these youth end up developing skills as far as public speaking, advocacy, that are taking them well beyond their involvement in this issue. And so I would start there, start with the Drug Free Community support program. And then through [cadca.org](http://cadca.org) and look at their youth leadership initiative.

**Cindy Carraway-Wilson:** Excellent. Thank you so much. We have so many more questions, but unfortunately we are at time. And so, I'd like to thank each and every one of our speakers for your participation. You have provided amazing information. I also want to thank our audience members who hung out with us to the end of this Q&A. We will be passing all of your questions, especially if we didn't get to them. But they will all get passed on to all of the speakers who are with us today and to the Department of Education to guide future content. We so appreciate that you were all here and we want to thank you all very much for sharing.

This was pretty amazing. You guys gave us a lot of resources. For our audience members, please remember to go back and visit the event webpage because all of these resources will be there for you to be clicking on and gaining the information. And several of our speakers have also given us permission to share their email addresses on their bios. Thank you all so very much and have a wonderful rest of the day.