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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

HHS Launches Campaign to Raise Awareness of Fentanyl Threat

DES MOINES, Iowa – The Iowa Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) announce the launch of a multi-platform, multi-audience messaging campaign aimed at educating parents and young Iowans about the dangers of counterfeit pills and fentanyl.

More and more young Iowans are experimenting with pills believing they will help them feel better, study more effectively or reduce social anxiety. “This is especially dangerous because many of these pills available to young people are counterfeit and contain deadly levels of fentanyl,” said Dr. Robert Kruse, State Medical Director. Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that’s 50 times stronger than heroin. It only takes 2mg of fentanyl to be deadly. Drug cartels make counterfeit pills with fentanyl because it’s cheap, highly addictive, and encourages repeat business.

The campaign features Deric and Kathy Kidd of central Iowa, who lost their 17-year-old son, Sebastian on July 30, 2021 due to counterfeit pills. “Everyone needs to know these conversations are essential. We all need to start an ongoing and open dialogue with our kids about the ramifications of taking any illicit substance. It’s imperative that we address the stigma associated with mental health and drug use. Understanding the correlation between the two is the first step in this fight,” shared Deric and Kathy Kidd.

“Raising awareness among young Iowans and their parents about the threat of fentanyl is one of the most important things we can do to save lives and combat the national opioid crisis,” Gov. Reynolds stated. “This new campaign is part of a comprehensive approach that also includes new legislation to enact stricter penalties and enhanced sentencing to hold drug manufacturers and dealers accountable.”

The campaign will include television spots with high-profile social media placements on Facebook and Instagram to enhance awareness of counterfeit pills among Iowans age 25 and up. Messaging will also be targeted toward teens and young adults through YouTube and mobile app targeted banners. HHS also developed a [conversation guide](#) for parents. The tool provides parents age specific information about how to start having this important conversation. The conversation guide can be downloaded from the [Your Life Iowa website](#).

In October 2022, HHS announced a program to provide Naloxone (an opioid reversal medication) in schools across Iowa so they can respond to students, staff, or visitors who may be experiencing an opioid overdose. Schools, businesses and organizations can apply for the program on the HHS website using [this form](#).

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