

# **Incorporating Drug Overdose Prevention Activities into Specialized Dockets**

Nichole Michaels, PhD  
Ashley Short Mejia, MSW  
Natalie Vargas



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.*

# Agenda

1. Presenter introductions
2. Burden of overdose
3. Overdose prevention strategies in specialized dockets
4. Narcan and FTS demonstrations
5. Barriers and facilitators to overdose prevention implementation activities

# Presenter Introductions

- Nichole L. Michaels, PhD, is a Principal Investigator in the Center for Injury Research and Policy at the Abigail Wexner Research Institute at Nationwide Children's Hospital and an Associate Professor in the Department of Pediatrics at The Ohio State University College of Medicine.
- Ashley Short Mejia, MSW is a Clinical Research Coordinator in Nichole Michaels' lab at Nationwide Children's Hospital. Ashley coordinates research studies related to the prevention of morbidity and mortality from drug overdoses and other injury and violence-related issues.
- Natalie Vargas received her BS in Public Health from The Ohio State University and is currently pursuing an MPH in Health Behavior and Health Promotion.

# Disclosures

- Nichole has been funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse at the National Institutes of Health to evaluate the feasibility, acceptability, and associated benefits and harms of using fentanyl test strips as a drug overdose harm reduction strategy. She has also been funded by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to evaluate fentanyl test strips as a strategy for preventing drug overdoses among individuals who are involved in the criminal justice system.

# Learning Objectives

After this session, attendees will be able to:

1. discuss the overdose prevention, reversal, and treatment strategies outlined in the Supreme Court of Ohio's Response for Ohio Courts on Opioid and Other Drug Overdoses
2. evaluate the overdose prevention, reversal, and treatment strategies present in their courts
3. conceptualize the implementation of overdose prevention, reversal, and treatment strategies in their courts

# What do you know about fentanyl?

# What do you know about overdoses?

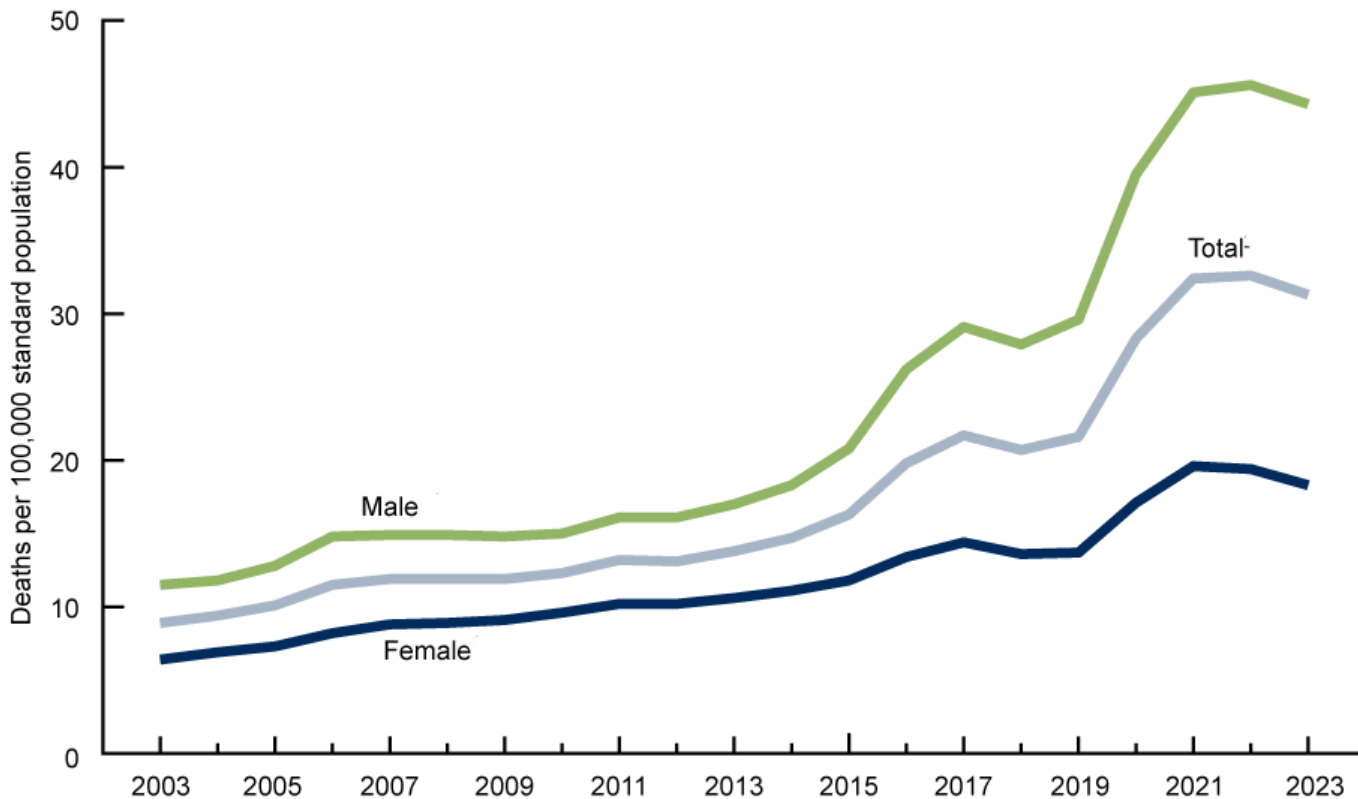
# What do you know about stigma?



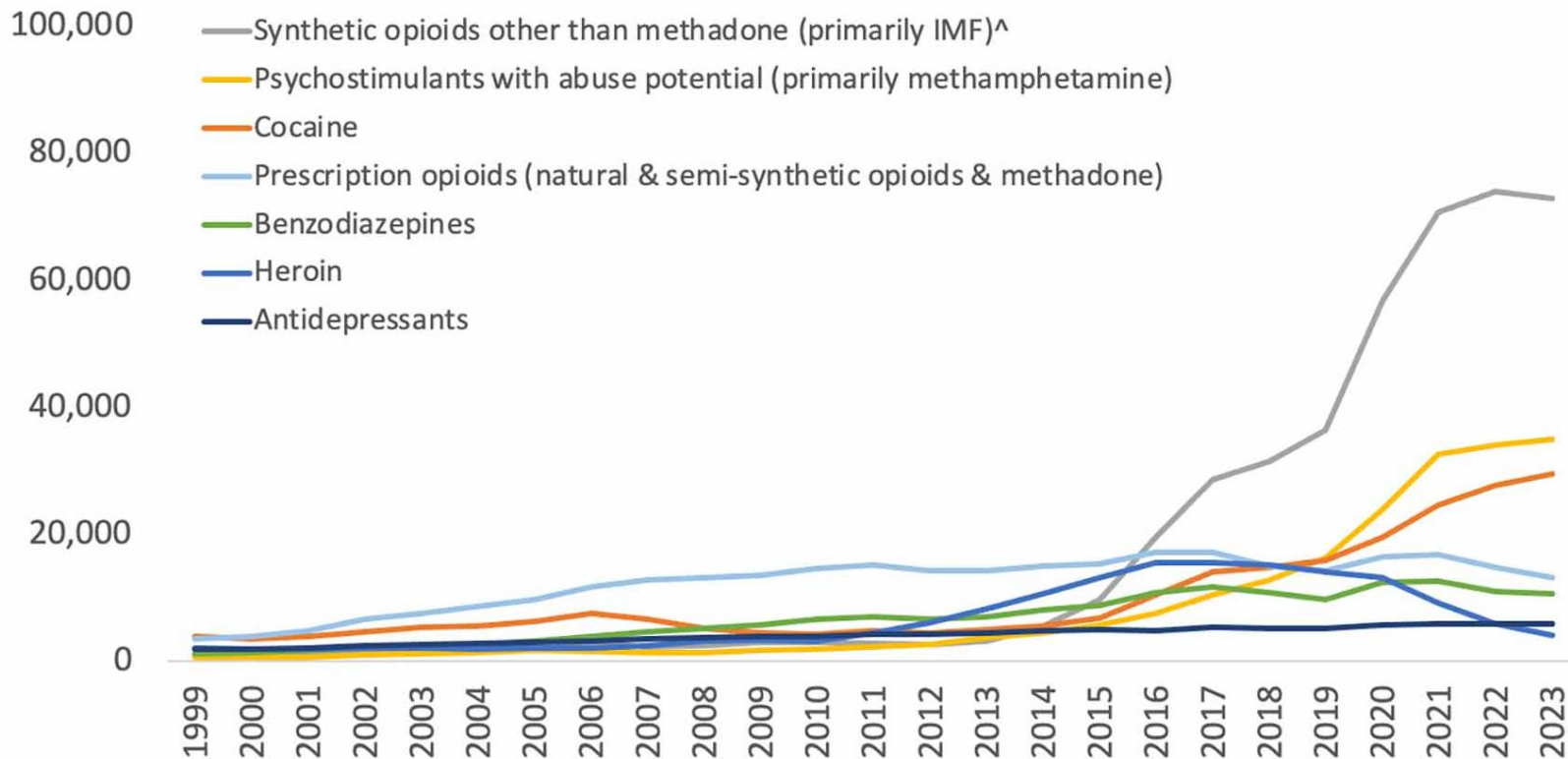
# Why does stigma matter?

# Burden of Drug Overdose

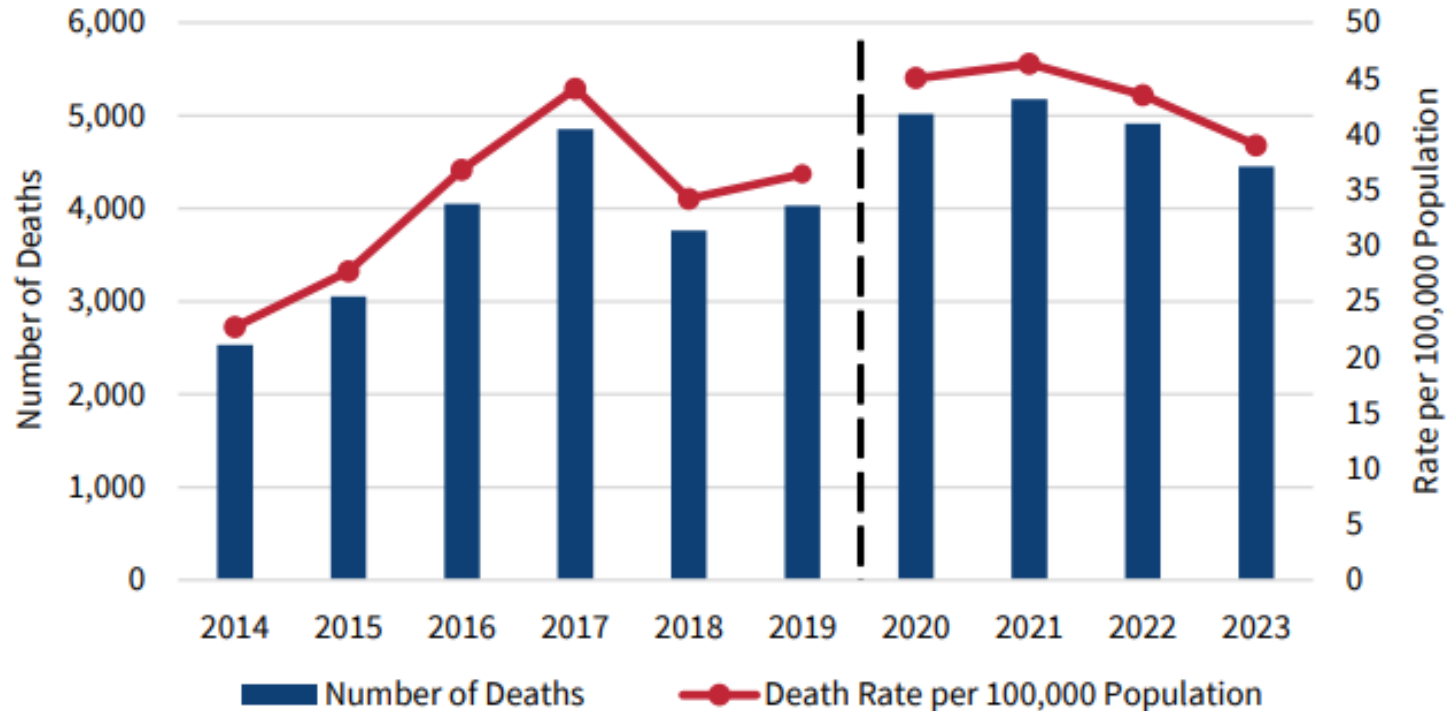
# Drug Overdose Death Rates in US, 2003-2023 (NCHS, 2024)



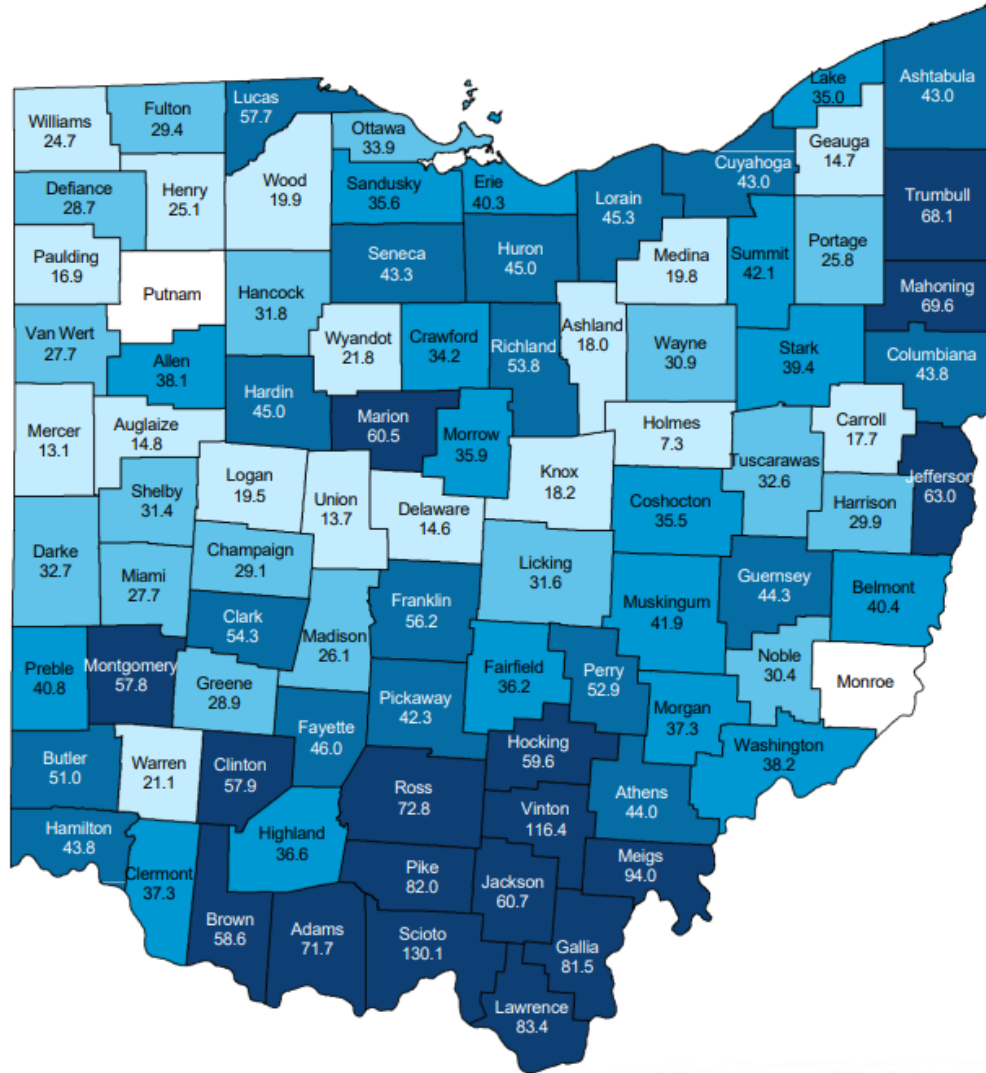
# Drug Overdose Deaths in US by Drug Category, 1999-2023 (CDC, Jan. 2025)



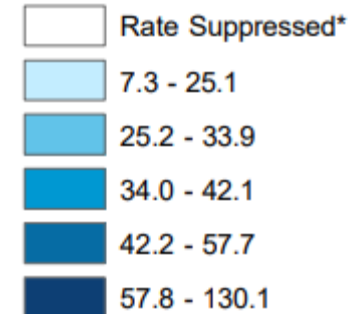
# Number and Rate of Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths in Ohio, 2014-2023 (ODH, 2024)



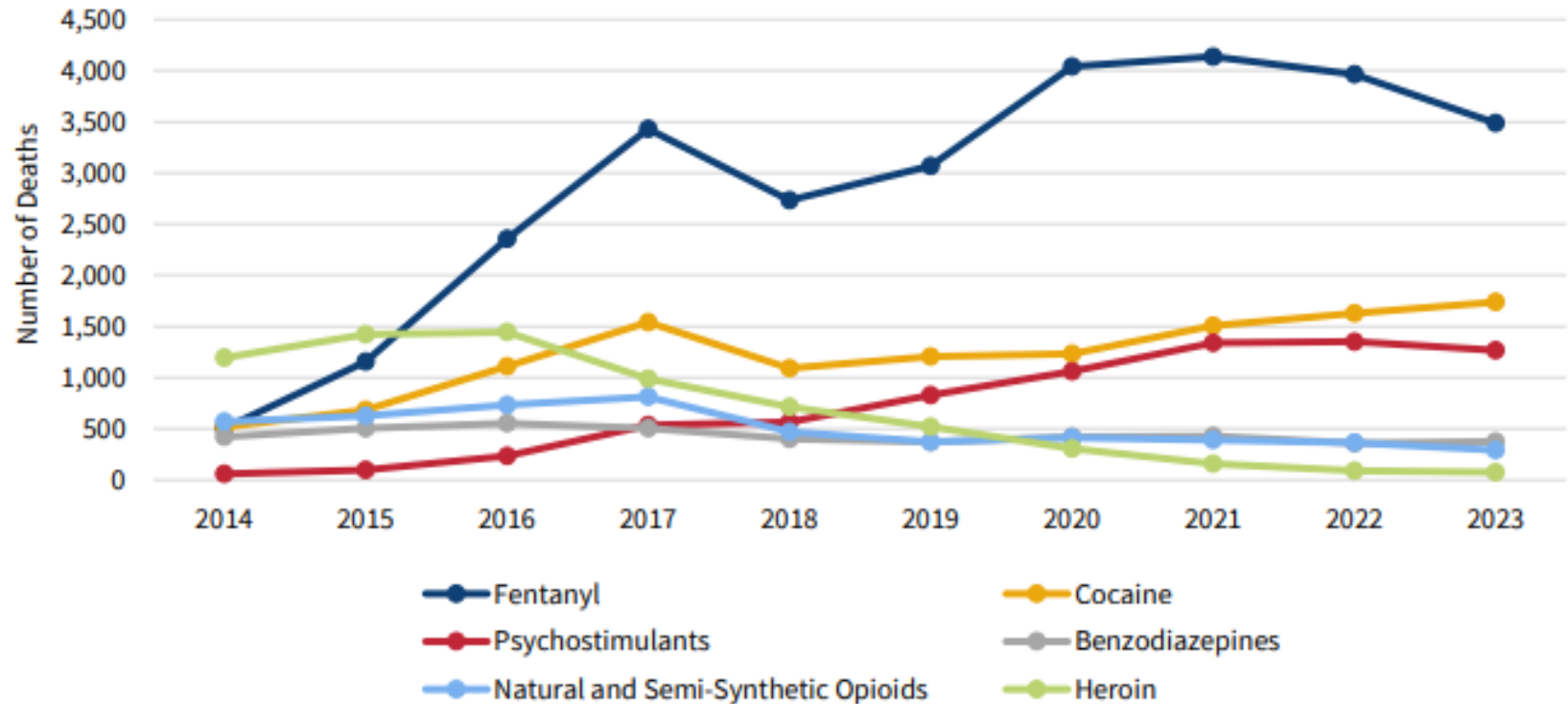
# Average age-adjusted rate of unintentional drug overdose deaths by county, 2020-2023 (ODH, 2024)



## Death Rate per 100,000 Population



# Unintentional Drug Overdose Deaths in Ohio, by Drug Category, 2014-2023 (ODH, 2024)



# Burden of overdose- Ohio

- Majority of drug overdose deaths in Ohio involve fentanyl (78%). Fentanyl is present in:
  - 79% of all cocaine-related deaths
  - 77% of all psychostimulant-related (e.g., methamphetamine) deaths
  - 73% of benzodiazepine-related deaths



# Fentanyl—Key Points

- Fentanyl is pervasive in the illicit drug supply
- Polysubstance overdoses are common
- User may be unaware of presence of fentanyl
- In order of reduce overdose deaths, co-exposure to fentanyl must be addressed

**Why should specialized dockets incorporate drug overdose prevention efforts into their activities?**

# Why incorporate overdose prevention?

Experts in substance use treatment recognize that relapse often occurs during the recovery process and the use of opioids after a period of abstinence puts individuals at increased risk of overdose.

# Relationship between Overdose, Incarceration, and Reentry

- 2/3 of people in jail or prison meet the criteria for a substance use disorder (Bronson, 2017).
- Overdose is the #1 cause of death among people recently released from prison and 3rd leading cause of death during jail custody (Binswanger, 2013; Fiscella, 2020).

# The Supreme Court of Ohio's Task Force on Reentry Final Report and Recommendations (2024)

OhioMHAS should consider that ensuring mental health services and access to Medication for Addiction Treatment are prioritized during incarceration and upon release. Current mental health and substance use treatment practices should be reviewed with ongoing education for staff and others who provide resources with a goal to:

- i. Increase timely communication with local alcohol drug addiction and mental health services boards to establish treatment connections pending release.
- ii. Establish consistency of treatment and medication in prison, jail, CBCFs, and halfway houses, and provide support for medication supplies and refills upon release. Local jails and CBCFs should consider exploring the use of charitable pharmacy programs to ensure medications are available and filled pre-release. Coordination with the local HCRV and other Veterans Justice Programs for appointments with providers for U.S. military veterans should also be considered.
- **iii. Explore supplying naloxone and fentanyl testing strips upon release and include education on their use.**

Link: <https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/Boards/Reentry/Report.pdf>

# The Supreme Court of Ohio: Response for Ohio Courts on Opioid and Other Drug Overdoses (2021)

Recommendation #4: Deploy overdose prevention, reversal, and treatment strategies

- For those where abstinence is not an immediate and/or feasible goal, deploying fentanyl testing strips and naloxone/Narcan® can reduce instances of overdose and fatality associated with substance misuse...
- Collaborating with local alcohol, drug addiction, and mental health boards (ADAMH) or existing community efforts will allow courts to become a presence in areas with high opiate use. These efforts should include supplying individuals being released from incarceration with evidence-based overdose prevention interventions, such as fentanyl testing strips and naloxone/Narcan®.

Link: <https://www.supremecourt.ohio.gov/docs/JCS/specDockets/certification/SDGuidance/OpioidResponse.pdf>



PROVIDE CHILDREN'S  
When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.

# Overdose prevention strategies

- Narcan
- Fentanyl Test Strips (FTS)
- Additional overdose risk mitigation:
  - Don't use
  - Use less
  - Use 'test' dose
  - Use slowly
  - Snort, rather than inject
  - Use with someone else present
  - Use with Narcan available
  - Call 911 if overdose symptoms occur

The purpose of overdose prevention is to  
keep people alive.



# Narcan demonstration

A person experiencing an overdose may die if they do not get help. If you suspect someone is overdosing:

**1) Check to see if they can respond**

- Shake them or call their name.
- Rub your knuckles hard in the middle of their chest (“sternal rub”).

**2) Call 911**

- Give the location and address

**3) Give rescue breaths**

- Place the person on their back, head tilted back and chin up.
- Make sure there is nothing in their mouth and pinch their nose closed.
- Breathe two slow breaths into their lungs, making sure the chest rises.

**4) Give Narcan**

- Follow the instructions for NARCAN® Nasal Spray.
- If the person does not respond in two to five minutes, give another dose.

**5) Stay until help arrives**

- Continue rescue breathing, one breath every five seconds.
- If the person is breathing on their own, put them in the recovery position and tilt their head back to keep their airway clear
- The person may start to overdose again when the naloxone wears off, so it is very important call 911.



**NATIONWIDE CHILDREN'S**  
*When your child needs a hospital, everything matters.*

# Fentanyl test strips

- Rapid fentanyl test strips (FTS) are designed to test for fentanyl and some fentanyl analogs in urine samples
- Increasingly used off-label to test illicit drugs for fentanyl before consumption

# Fentanyl test strips

- Highly sensitive and specific in detecting fentanyl
  - Detection level: 13 micrograms/ml
  - Sensitivity: 96-100%
  - Specificity: 90-98%
- Can be used to test injectable drugs, powders, and pills
- Relatively inexpensive (\$0.50/strip)

# FTS Limitations

- Cannot detect all fentanyl analogs
- May not detect very low concentrations of fentanyl
- Can't determine fentanyl potency
- Human error
- Drug may contain other (non-fentanyl) adulterants

# FTS demonstration

- Mix small amount of drug with water in clean container
- Dip the test strip for 15 seconds
- Check result:
  - 1 line = positive for fentanyl presence
  - 2 lines = no fentanyl detected

# **Activity: identify barriers and facilitators to overdose prevention implementation**

- **What opportunities for overdose prevention exist in your work?**
- **What do you need to succeed in implementing overdose prevention activities in your court?**
- **What can researchers do to support your work?**

# Thank You!

[Nichole.michaels@nationwidechildrens.org](mailto:Nichole.michaels@nationwidechildrens.org)

[Ashley.shortmejia@nationwidechildrens.org](mailto:Ashley.shortmejia@nationwidechildrens.org)