

# Fentanyl Test Strips

## A grassroots initiative

Beth Zietlow-DeJesus, MA, Director External Affairs  
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## What Are Fentanyl Test Strips?



- ▶ Fentanyl test strips are disposable, single-use tests that can detect the presence of fentanyl or fentanyl analogs in a substance.
- ▶ The fentanyl test strips we use identify 12 analogs including the even more deadly Carfentanil.
- ▶ They cost \$1.00 each.



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## How Fentanyl Test Strips Work



<https://youtu.be/INSdu-Rlyfk>



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## Research on Fentanyl Test Strip Program

- ▶ Johns Hopkins School of Public Health study indicated:
  - ▶ 86% of drug users would use fentanyl test strips
  - ▶ 84% are concerned about fentanyl
  - ▶ 70% would change use behaviors



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## Why Use Fentanyl Test Strips?



- ▶ Anyone using illicit drugs - heroin, powdered cocaine, crack - can use these strips to see if the drugs they bought contain fentanyl and make an informed decision about using that drug.
- ▶ Many cocaine users do not have a tolerance for opioids, especially not an opioid as strong as Fentanyl.
- ▶ A very small amount of Fentanyl can stop someone from breathing.
- ▶ That's why the ADAMHS Board, along with its partners, are distributing fentanyl test strips throughout Cuyahoga County.

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## FTS as a Harm Reduction Method in Cuyahoga County

- ▶ PILOT (2018) - The ADAMHS Board provided 15,000 test strips to Circle Health Services to pass out at its clinic and on the syringe exchange van. Initial survey results showed that nearly 60% of individuals changed their use behavior when fentanyl first came to the streets. That program has passed out tens of thousands of test strips since it started.
- ▶ INCREASING ACCESS (2019 & 2020) - The ADAMHS Board provided a \$15,000 grant for test strips to Care Alliance Health Center to distribute at their Medical Clinics and with outreach workers.



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## Grassroots Program



- ▶ In May 2019, Cuyahoga had 72 deaths in one month - 39 were the result of fentanyl in cocaine.
- ▶ Cuyahoga County gave the ADAMHS Board funding to purchase 15,000 test strips to pass out in a grassroots campaign.
- ▶ We contacted community partners like barber shops, corner stores and gas stations, and did a targeted radio and digital outreach campaign to areas with highest OD incidence.
- ▶ Most partners are willing to display the test strips on their front counter or other accessible locations
- ▶ Deaths dropped to 24 in June and 28 in July. Because of the success of the program, continued funding was allocated to distribute 15,000 strips each quarter.

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## Data Driven Approach

- ▶ Received data from the local DEA and other partners where fatal and non-fatal overdoses occurred
- ▶ Reached out to local businesses within 1,000 feet of those locations to distribute test strips
- ▶ 100+ entities to date have been given test strips including local businesses, government agencies, treatment providers, homeless service providers, hospitals, religious centers, and advocates within the community.



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## Grassroots Program - COVID

- ▶ In March 2020, grassroots distribution halted. Local deaths had also dropped significantly.
- ▶ In May 2020, when things opened back up we saw 52 deaths in Cuyahoga County.
- ▶ MetroHealth, a local county hospital, established a Harm Reduction RV and we gave strips to them.
- ▶ When calling locations, businesses became reluctant to agree to strips. So, we put boots on the ground in high OD areas. In 2021, we added Narcan to our distribution efforts.
- ▶ The ADAMHS Board continues to utilize the most up-to-date data on overdoses for distribution.



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## Metro RV Survey Results:

- ▶ 3,894 Fentanyl test strips were distributed from August 2020 to December 2020
- ▶ 56 people reported back that they tested their drugs
- ▶ 83% of tests were positive
- ▶ 59% of clients who had a positive test strip reported they changed their use behavior



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## Barriers

- ▶ **Stigma**, the negative perception about people who use drugs:
  - ▶ Talking to partners helps bridge the gap and addresses stigma
  - ▶ Community partners, family members and people in recovery have helped us get new partners and address stigma
- ▶ **Corporate Locations:**
  - ▶ Managers in local restaurants, hotels and pharmacies are interested in the program. However, they struggle to get approval from corporate managers
  - ▶ Advocacy is required to address this barrier



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## Questions?

Beth Zietlow-DeJesus  
 Cuyahoga County ADAMHS Board  
 Director of External Affairs  
[dejesus@adamhsc.org](mailto:dejesus@adamhsc.org)



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