

June 20, 2017

Dear Parents/Guardians,

As you and your children prepare for summer vacation, the Surrey RCMP and Surrey School District would like to update you on some of the current risks with respect to illicit drugs so you can all have a safe summer. It is imperative that both parents/caregivers and youth are aware of the dangers of experimenting with drugs.

In the last couple of years, the drug environment has changed dramatically, in large part due to the introduction of fentanyl. Fentanyl is a powerful prescription painkiller that is up to 100 times more toxic than morphine. It is being imported and sold illegally with tragic consequences; just a tiny amount can cause serious harm or death.

Around the Lower Mainland, fentanyl and drugs similar to fentanyl have been found mixed into other drugs including heroin, powder cocaine, crack cocaine and methamphetamine. It is also found as a primary ingredient in fake oxycodone and Percocet tablets. These new drug combinations have caused many deaths. In 2016, Surrey experienced 113 overdose deaths, the second highest in the province. In the first four months of 2017, Surrey has already had 51 overdose deaths.

Summer brings festivals, concerts and house parties that many students will attend. "Ecstasy" or "Molly" (MDMA) is a common drug that surfaces at these types of events, and it can easily be mixed with fentanyl, which would put users at a higher risk of overdose and death. MDMA is a hallucinogen with stimulant properties. It is usually sold as a loose white powder and pressed into tablets with different logos or packaged in gelatin tablets. MDMA users usually experience euphoria, enhanced self-esteem and increased sociability, which is why it is very popular in party settings.

Despite our best efforts as parents, our children can easily be at-risk of drug use. They are young and influenced by people and factors outside of our control. You should not assume your child isn't experimenting with drugs or thinking about trying drugs. It may surprise you to know that 54% of overdose deaths in BC occurred in private residences. It is important for parents to know that this is not a problem isolated to homelessness or drug addicts – overdose deaths can easily happen to first time users or those experimenting with drugs.

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LEADERSHIP IN LEARNING

We encourage you to protect your children by speaking to them about drugs – particularly about the hidden nature of fentanyl and its lethal power. Keep an eye on your child's activities, mood and friends, and keep the dialogue open. Visit Fraser Health's website (www.fraserhealth.ca/health-info/) or Drug Free Kids Canada (www.drugfreekidscanada.org) for tips on how to talk to your kids about drugs. The Surrey RCMP also offers a Parent Helpline (604-599-7800) that provides assistance to parents who are concerned about their children becoming involved in illegal activities.

The Surrey RCMP and Surrey School District are committed to helping keep families safe. We wish you and your family a safe and enjoyable summer.

Sincerely,



Dr. Jordan Tinney
Superintendent of Schools/CEO
Surrey School District



Assistant Commissioner Dwayne McDonald
Officer in Charge
Surrey RCMP