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DA Responds to Spike in Overdose Deaths; New Digital Outreach Campaign Launches

The San Diego County District Attorney's Office announced today that it is kicking off the third and final phase of an extended opioid awareness outreach campaign. The [San Diego Opioid Project](#) is designed to educate and change behavior and ultimately reduce opioid overdose deaths in the County. The launch comes just one week after law enforcement officials [warned the public](#) about an alarming spike in fentanyl-related overdose deaths the first six months of this year.

This latest phase of the San Diego Opioid Project focuses on laced substances and warns people who might take illegal opioids they obtain from a friend or a drug dealer that they may be laced with deadly substances such as fentanyl.

You can watch the flagship video in [English](#) or in [Spanish](#).



In 2019, there were 152 fentanyl-related overdose deaths in San Diego County. But in the first six months of this year, there are likely already 203 fentanyl-related deaths, of which 119 have been confirmed and another 84 are pending confirmation.

“This latest phase of the campaign couldn't come at a more important time, given the disturbing uptick in overdoses we're seeing,” said San Diego County District Attorney

Summer Stephan. “We've seen a good response to the first phase of this outreach and our hope is that this latest push comes at a time when we're not just educating the public but saving lives.”

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The District Attorney's office and San Diego County Health and Human Services Agency partnered on the campaign. The San Diego County Board of Supervisors voted unanimously to support the innovative outreach. The DA worked with the San Diego-based Rescue Agency, which has a national track record of success when it comes to changing behavior in various areas of public health.

The first phase of the San Diego Opioid Project addressed the misconception that people think they can abuse prescription opioids 'safely.' It educated people that opioids affect your brain exactly like heroin does. It also addresses the misconception that opioids help people heal from injuries.

The second phase of the campaign focused on how quickly people can overdose while others around them may not even notice.

The San Diego Opioid Project is rolling out primarily online, with social media and digital ads that are specifically targeted to people at risk of becoming addicted.

The ads and posts all drive people to a website: SanDiegoOpioidProject.org. Some ads are in Spanish and there's a Spanish-language version of the website.

Prescription opioids are to blame for more than 2,200 accidental overdose deaths in San Diego County over the last 10-years. In 2018, 210 people died from accidental overdose caused by one or more prescription opioids, alone or combined with other drugs or alcohol.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office

The San Diego County DA's Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.