

STATE OF CONNECTICUT
DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC HEALTH

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Environmental Health Section

MEMO

TO: FILE

FROM: Sharee Rusnak, Epidemiologist 3

THRU: Meg Harvey, Epidemiologist 4 *MJH*

CC: Jim Vannoy, Section Chief

Date: December 6, 2023

Re: Guidance to the Hartford Health Department During a Fentanyl Event at a Residential Health Care Facility in Hartford.

Background and Statement of Issues

On November 3, 2023, the Connecticut Department of Public Health (CT DPH) was asked to provide guidance to the Hartford Department of Health and Human Services (HDHHS) during a fentanyl event at [REDACTED] Hartford, Connecticut. [REDACTED] is a residential facility where many of the residents have mental health issues. This Letter Health Consultation (LHC) documents the details of the fentanyl event and the guidance that we provided to the HDHHS.

Providing technical assistance to local health departments about cleanup and re-occupancy of indoor spaces after spills or releases when there is potential exposure to chemicals or drug residues is a type of assistance that falls within the scope and purpose of the cooperative agreement program grant from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ASTDR). CT DPH has had an ATSDR cooperative agreement program for more than 30 years.



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The CT DPH, Facility Licensing and Investigation Section notified the CT DPH Toxic Hazards Section on November 3, 2023 that a fentanyl event occurred at [REDACTED] in Hartford. A social worker went into a resident room at the facility and found a white powder substance in a clear plastic container on a resident nightstand. Upon removing the substance and bringing it to administration, she felt ill and the facility called 911. Local Police and Fire Departments responded and had the facility transfer the resident into another room and the room was sealed off immediately. The housekeeper stated after the police got there that she saw the same substance in another resident room. Police and fire then directed the facility to move this resident to another room as well. The facility did room searches at the direction of the police on the affected floor. Due to the social worker's symptoms, police and fire called DEEP to come and test the substance. The substance was positive for fentanyl. HDHHS responded as well and gave the facility instructions to decontaminate the room by an outside vendor, per CT DPH's guidelines which are largely based on the United States Environmental Protection Agency's (US EPA's) guidelines for addressing fentanyl events (CT DPH 2022 and EPA 2021).

The HVAC system was also shut down immediately. The shut-off did not affect the heat in the facility. The social worker involved in the incident went to the hospital and was released the same day without receiving any treatment. Her urine was tested and fentanyl was not present.

The HDHHS asked DPH Toxic Hazards Program to provide guidance regarding the recommended steps they should take before re-opening the two rooms.

A contractor hired by the CT DEEP Spills Program performed a cleanup of the first room and removed several pieces of furniture from the second room. The cleaned room was closed and could not be entered until the wipe sampling results were received by the HDHHS and re-entry was authorized by HDHHS [REDACTED]

The second room was deep cleaned by housekeeping staff before the resident could re-occupy. The cleanup contractor was confident that only a deep cleaning was necessary for this room.

CT DPH recommended post cleanup clearance wipe sampling and analysis for the presence of fentanyl in the first room where the CT DEEP Spills Program and the cleanup contractor identified that fentanyl was present and where the fentanyl cleanup occurred. CT DPH also recommended replacing air filters in the first room. Both of these recommendations were carried out by the HDHHS and CT DEEP Spills Program.

Environmental Contamination

One composite sample made up of 4 individual wipe samples was taken from 4 places in the first room where the contractor cleaned up the fentanyl: the bathroom door handle, the nightstand, the room door handle and the floor. The samples were taken to a lab and analyzed for the presence of fentanyl. The sample analysis results did not detect the presence of fentanyl.

Discussion

Because the composite wipe sample did not detect fentanyl, CT DPH recommended that the first room could be occupied again. This recommendation is consistent with the US EPA's guidelines for addressing fentanyl events (EPA 2021). The second room was occupied again after the housekeeping staff cleaning.

Conclusion and Recommendations

HDHHS followed all of CT DPH's recommended steps before re-opening the two rooms. This ensured that there was no potential for residents or staff to be exposed to fentanyl during cleanup and after the rooms were re-opened. While the room were closed, HDHHS provided accurate and timely information to staff so that they would be informed about the situation and the actions being taken to clean and safely reopen the two rooms at the facility.

After the wipe sampling, because fentanyl was not detected in first room impacted by the fentanyl release, CT DPH recommended that no further action was necessary.

Works Cited

2022 CT DPH. Connecticut Department of Public Health. DRAFT: Steps to Take When Addressing a Fentanyl or Carfentanyl Event. March 18, 2022.

2021 EPA. Voluntary Guidelines for Methamphetamine and Fentanyl Laboratory Cleanup. United States Environmental Protection Agency. *Available at:*
https://www.epa.gov/sites/default/files/documents/meth_lab_guidelines.pdf. August 2021.

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