



Paul A. Pettit, MSL, CPH  
Public Health Director

**GENESEE COUNTY  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
3837 West Main Street Rd.  
Batavia, NY 14020  
(585) 344-2580 x5555

**ORLEANS COUNTY  
HEALTH DEPARTMENT**  
14016 State Route 31, Suite 101  
Albion, NY 14411  
(585) 589-3278

## **CONTACT INFORMATION:**

Kaitlin Pettine, MPH  
Public Health Educator/Public Information Officer  
[Kaitlin.Pettine@co.genesee.ny.us](mailto:Kaitlin.Pettine@co.genesee.ny.us)  
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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **Fentanyl: The Current Wave of the Opioid Crisis in Genesee County**

The United States has passed a grim, heartbreaking milestone: a record number of Americans are dying as a result of a drug overdose. Between April 2020 and April 2021, drugs – mostly synthetic opioids such as fentanyl – [took the lives of more than 100,000](#) of our sons and daughters, loved ones and neighbors, community members, and friends. During the same twelve-month period, eleven people died in Genesee County from opioid overdoses, and fentanyl was involved in all of these deaths.

This rise in opioid overdoses across the U.S. is largely due to illicit fentanyl contaminating street drugs. Pharmaceutical fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is FDA-approved as a patch or lozenge for the treatment of severe pain. Fentanyl is at least 50 times more potent than heroin. Most recent cases of fentanyl-related harm, overdose, and death in the U.S. are linked to illegally made fentanyl that is mixed into drugs like counterfeit painkillers and benzodiazepines, heroin, cocaine, and methamphetamine. Fentanyl has also been detected in fake pills that look like candy.

“A small amount of fentanyl, smaller than the tip of a pencil can kill someone,” stated Paul Pettit, Public Health Director for Genesee and Orleans County Health Departments (GO Health). “This is a serious issue that impacts our children, our families and our community.”

Because we have an unregulated and criminalized drug supply, there is no way to tell if a street drug someone is using is 100% safe. This means that someone may use a product that they believe their body is able to tolerate, but it may actually be much stronger than they expect due to being contaminated with fentanyl, without knowing.

The opioid crisis is not confined to a particular subset of our population. The epidemic affects wealthy and poor, black and white, rural and urban, and every corner of Genesee County.

### **HEALing Our Communities**

The street drug supply has always been unpredictable and inconsistent – this is especially true now. People who use drugs should assume overdose risk no matter

what drug they're using, and practice as much harm reduction as consistently possible. Our community should also practice harm reduction strategies by:

- Knowing the signs of an overdose.
- Carrying naloxone and knowing how to use it.
- Looking out for others in the community and administering naloxone if you suspect an overdose!

By following these harm reduction strategies, ***together, we can HEAL our communities*** and reduce preventable overdose deaths.

### **More Information**

To learn more about fentanyl and naloxone, visit:

- HEALing Communities Study Website: [www.HealTogetherNY.org/Genesee](http://www.HealTogetherNY.org/Genesee)
- GOW Opioid Taskforce Website: [www.gowopioidtaskforce.org/](http://www.gowopioidtaskforce.org/)
- GO Health Facebook: [www.facebook.com/GOHealthNY](https://www.facebook.com/GOHealthNY)

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