

HIGH POTENCY SYNTHETIC OPIOIDS

Child Dependency Courts

High potency synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl, pose a significant public health crisis, particularly affecting families involved with child welfare courts. These powerful substances are not only highly addictive but also dangerously potent, leading to increased risks of overdose and severe health consequences.

Understanding how high-potency synthetic opioids impact child welfare involved families allows court systems to better protect the safety of children while providing families with the supports and services they need.

Definitions

Synthetic Opioids are man-made drugs designed to mimic the effects of natural opioids

High-Potency Synthetic Opioids are variants of synthetic opioids, like fentanyl, and are significantly more powerful than traditional opioids



Senate Bill 6109

Effective June 6, 2024

In 2024, the Washington State Legislature passed SB 6109 which requires that “the court shall give great weight to the **lethality of high-potency synthetic opioids and public health guidance from the department of health** related to high-potency synthetic opioids, including fentanyl...” when making removal and placement decisions.

[RCW 13.34.030\(15\)](#)



Passage of SB 6109 was driven by an **increase in child fatalities** in recent years connected to fentanyl misuse and the **lack of services** for those in need of treatment for addiction.

Public Health Guidance on High-Potency Synthetic Opioids: Considerations in Assessing Child Safety

This guidance offers information and recommendations for professionals on addressing high-potency synthetic opioids, such as fentanyl, in the context of child safety. Potential threats of exposure and ingestion in children through all stages of development are examined, along with safety planning strategies that can be used to keep families safely together whenever possible. DOH guidance includes strategies for overdose prevention, safe handling/storage, effective treatment, and harm reduction.



[**View Guidance**](#)



The Department of Health expects their guidance will change over time, as they continue to learn more about the impacts of high potency synthetic opioids on children and families.

For questions please contact [Family & Youth Justice Programs](#)