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Fentanyl overdosing is a crisis in Washington State that primarily affects individuals between the ages of 24 and 44. Between the years 2019 and 2021, the number of statewide fentanyl-related deaths doubled each year, from 225 in 2019 to 1071 in 2021. In 2022, the number of statewide deaths did significantly drop to 649. But the concern is still real. I created this PSA with the exigence that a fentanyl education bill, which would require students to learn of the dangers of fentanyl in public schools, has been passed through the Washington State House and is now moving to the State Senate. Washington legislators are taking this crisis seriously, so publishing this PSA at this time is very fitting and highly impactful.

This PSA has the intended audience of teenagers to millennials – or anyone that uses the Instagram platform. It is important to reach teenagers while the brain is still developing and explain the risks associated with fentanyl overdosing so that they can avoid addiction and be set up for success in the long run. It is equally important to reach the audience whom fentanyl impacts the most: 24–44-year-olds. Thus, the Instagram platform is fitting for this type of presentation. I tailored my PSA to this age group by using a combination of graphics (which catches the eye of young adults with limited attention spans), bolded text, and a consistent color scheme which gives the ad a clean appearance. I chose to insert an image of multi-colored fentanyl pills on the first slide of the post to catch the viewer’s attention and to show how illegal drug manufacturers go out of their way to make the drugs look as appealing as possible.

I addressed the disproportionalities of fentanyl overdosing in my 5th slide, titled “Facts and Stats”. I used pie charts to show geographical disproportionality – the fact that King County has 32% more fentanyl deaths relative to its population. I also addressed demographic inequities in showing that Black individuals have a 122% disproportionality relative to their population in WA. Males and construction workers are also affected disproportionately. This PSA can be used to highlight these disparities and it can be promoted on social media groups (Instagram channels, Facebook groups, etc.) whose members are part of these disproportionately affected groups.

I first learned of the gravity of the fentanyl crisis when I read an article saying that three people had died of a fentanyl overdose on the same morning in Renton, WA, the city where I go to school. Until then, the crisis had felt distant. But now, knowing that it had infiltrated the streets I walked every day, its presence felt real. No community, no matter how seemingly insulated, was immune to the reach of fentanyl. This realization led me to choose this topic for this project.