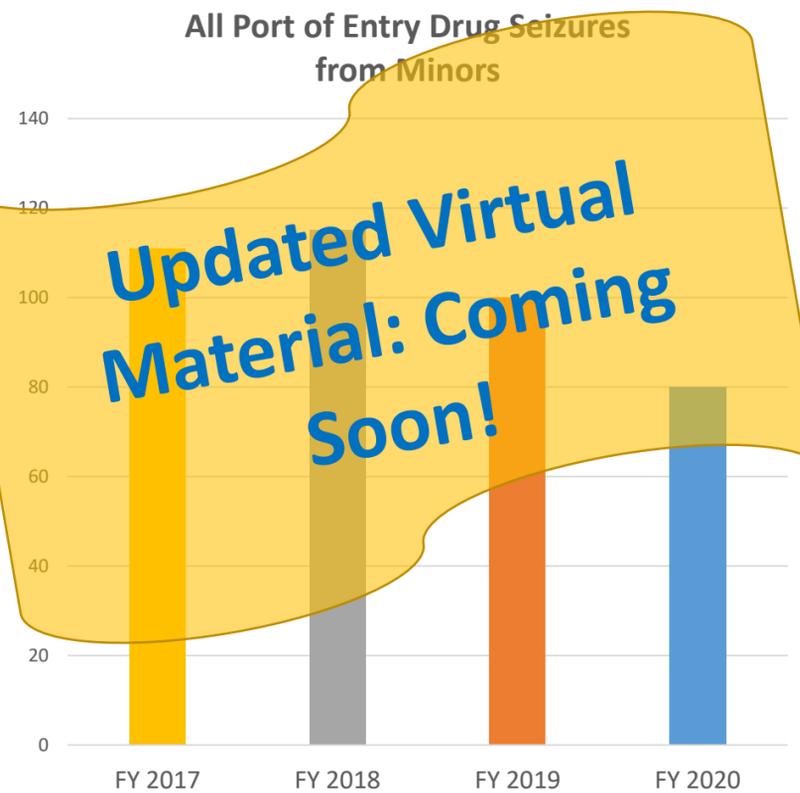


Combatting Juvenile Drug Smuggling in San Diego County

Background: Recently, we have seen an uptick in juveniles working for drug cartels to smuggle drugs across the border. The juveniles receive money, electronics, and other incentives in exchange for illegally crossing dangerous drugs into the U.S. and are told by the cartels that they won't receive severe punishments because of their young age. The use of juveniles is not new, but the types of drugs that they are smuggling has changed. Juveniles were caught smuggling the deadly drug fentanyl for the first time in 2018. Fentanyl is a very dangerous substance because it only takes a few milligrams, less than the size of a few grains of sugar, to cause respiratory depression, overdose, and possibly death. The dangers of fentanyl are not limited to the person carrying it since fentanyl exposure can occur through the drug becoming airborne. If a package were to open, anyone in the area who breathed it would be at risk of fentanyl poisoning.



2 mg of Fentanyl:
A potentially lethal dose

How do they get involved? Juveniles are often recruited at school by their classmates. Juvenile recruiting also occurs at after-school functions, camps, libraries, on public transportation, and online via social media outlets, gaming consoles, text messages, or chat rooms. Recruiters could be other juveniles, parents, familiar adults, or complete strangers.

Who is at risk? Juveniles who cross the border frequently are at highest risk for getting recruited. Those who don't cross the border are still at risk, and may be recruited to become a recruiter.

What can we do to prevent this from happening?

Education of students:

No-cost assemblies for students; suitable for large groups; about an hour in length, including Q&A

Education of parents and staff:

No-cost trainings for parents, staff, and community groups

What is covered:

The dangers of drugs, the risks of getting involved with drug cartels, the real consequences for getting caught (both immediate and future consequences), the effects that drugs have on our local communities and families, connections to resources to help families in need rather than getting "quick, easy" money from smuggling, and advice on what to do if you are already involved in drug smuggling.

Post-Assembly Results from Students:

85% Agree or Strongly Agree that smuggling is not worth the risks and consequences

76% Agree or Strongly Agree that "I know the best way to respond if someone tries to recruit me to smuggle"

85% Agree or Strongly Agree that "I can make smart choices to protect my future"

Who we are:

U.S. Attorney, Drug Enforcement Administration, San Diego District Attorney, Homeland Security Investigations, and Customs and Border Protection. Our goal is to raise awareness of the issue and equip youth with both knowledge and resources so that they can stay safely out of harm's way and refuse to smuggle drugs.



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