



ORANGE COUNTY
SHERIFF'S DEPARTMENT



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Fentanyl-related deaths in Orange County see five-year low

SANTA ANA, Calif. (Nov. 13, 2025): A recently released report from the Orange County Sheriff-Coroner shows a decrease in fentanyl-related deaths, marking a five-year low in the county.

The OC Sheriff Coroner Division report shows there were 407 fentanyl-related deaths in 2024, down from 613 deaths in 2023. The numbers reported so far for 2025 are continuing to show a downward trend.

"Seeing a progressive drop in the number of fentanyl-related deaths is encouraging and a testament to the collaborative work of the Sheriff's Department and the County in addressing this complex and challenging issue," said **Don Barnes, Orange County Sheriff-Coroner**. "However, our work is far from done. We will continue to work together to be innovative and effective in fighting fentanyl."

From programming to enforcement to legislative efforts, the County of Orange (County) has dedicated numerous resources over the last decade that have contributed to the countywide reduction in fentanyl-related deaths, including efforts by the Board of Supervisors, the Orange County Sheriff's Department, and the OC Health Care Agency (HCA).

"I am encouraged and hopeful that the collective efforts by our County are making an impact in the fight against fentanyl," said **Chair Doug Chaffee**, Fourth District. "The fight isn't over, so we will continue in these efforts to save lives and protect our community."

The OC Sheriff has intensified enforcement efforts to dismantle the networks responsible for introducing fentanyl and other dangerous narcotics into our communities. Last year, narcotics teams seized more than 184 pounds of fentanyl powder and nearly 45,300 fentanyl pills.

In addition, beginning in 2021, the OC Sheriff began investigating all drug-related overdoses as possible homicides in an effort to hold drug dealers accountable. Since then, multiple cases have been submitted for prosecution at both the local and federal levels.

"Any life lost to fentanyl abuse is one too many. I commend the collective efforts by County departments and my office to educate the community and distribute naloxone to help reduce fentanyl deaths amongst our Orange County youth," stated **Vice Chair Katrina Foley**, Fifth



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District. "From here, we must continue prioritizing treatment and holding drug traffickers accountable for poisoning our young adults."

In the custody setting, a strong partnership with the HCA's Correctional Health Services (CHS) team has led to the implementation of additional screening, treatment, and programs to address substance use disorder in Orange County's jails. The two-pronged strategy of enforcement, along with treatment and recovery services, is critical to saving lives and supporting long-term recovery across Orange County.

"My office is committed to Orange County's prevention and education efforts to combat the fentanyl epidemic," said **Supervisor Janet Nguyen**, First District. "I'm excited to hear that our efforts are resulting in reduced deaths associated with this deadly drug. I have been fighting for years to draw attention to this crisis, including writing a law that dramatically increases the prison sentences for fentanyl dealers."

Over the last four years, the HCA launched two major media campaigns against fentanyl and other deadly drugs impacting Orange County. Both campaigns were comprehensive initiatives aimed at raising awareness about the critical issues of fentanyl misuse. They included outreach efforts and educational materials on prevention and rescue resources to empower the public to access local resources for assistance. The campaigns included:

- The "Life is Greater Than Drugs" which targeted OC youth to showcase life with music, sports, artistic and creative dreams versus a life misusing drugs like opioids and fentanyl, causing devastating loss of those dreams. Visit www.lifeisgreaterthandrugs.com.
- The "Fentanyl is Forever" campaign targets all OC residents, speaking to families, friends, and providers to drive awareness of the dangers of fentanyl and empower the public to access local resources for assistance. Visit www.fentanylisforeveroc.org.

"These continued reductions are very encouraging for my district, where fentanyl-related deaths have been a scourge on our communities," stated **Supervisor Vicente Sarmiento**, Second District. "We know that many of these overdose deaths are preventable, and that outreach and distribution of medication to affected populations are key drivers of these results. The combined efforts of the County teams are working and support our commitment to continue the momentum."

The use of Medication Assisted Treatment (MAT) is helping to rebuild and save the lives of individuals with substance use disorders, both for the general population and for the populations in custody settings. In OC, robust intake screening and MAT provide support for jail and medical staff to assist those with substance use disorder. Additionally, all incarcerated persons in MAT receive training on Naloxone, the opioid antagonist that can reverse the effects of an overdose, and every person released from custody is supplied with Naloxone.

"It's incredibly reassuring to see lives being saved due to the efforts of the legislation we have supported and by the hard work done by the County and its departments," shared **Supervisor**



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Donald Wagner, Third District. “Fighting to protect our residents from this poisonous killer of our young people is something everyone can – and should – get behind.”

“In addition to jail programming and services, the HCA takes a comprehensive approach to addressing substance use disorders and, specifically, fentanyl use,” said **HCA Director, Dr. Veronica Kelley**. “We have strong collaborative partnerships with our Sheriff’s Department and Board offices, and have implemented strategies to care for the clients, including incarcerated individuals, to ensure they receive the care and support they need so they can begin recovery and rehabilitation.”

If you or someone you know is struggling with substance use, there are many resources to help combat issues with drugs or alcohol. Visit www.ocnavigator.org.

Orange County Fentanyl-Related Deaths									
2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
20	37	56	107	147	433	717	676	613	407

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