The video opens with actual TV news reports attesting to the potency and toxicity of the opioid fentanyl. Viewers hear firsthand the stories of two parents who each lost a child to a fentanyl overdose. The title of the video, *Fentanyl: The Deadliest Opioid*, appears on screen.

The host of the video, Alicia, introduces herself and then asks the question, “What is fentanyl?” She says plainly, “It is a highly addictive and dangerous opioid drug. It is a true synthetic opioid analgesic.” It was originally created for patients with severe pain in end-of-life situations. However, now it is drug dealers who are making their own brand of powdered fentanyl in clandestine labs all over the world. Alicia says fentanyl is now 50 times more powerful than morphine and 100 times more powerful than heroin. She goes on to say that according to the CDC, fentanyl has been responsible for over half of the overdose deaths in the U.S., which was 66,000 in 2017. The father who lost his daughter to fentanyl says people don’t have any idea how powerful fentanyl is. Alicia then reveals the many street names of fentanyl: among them, China White, Apache, TNT, Tango and Cash, Kill Pill and Lollipops.

Fentanyl, she says, is a versatile drug that comes in many forms including a patch, a pill, a powder and an injection. Alicia says that the DEA has classified fentanyl as a Schedule II drug, which means it has medical uses but also a high potential for abuse. She goes on to say that the people creating fentanyl for illegal recreational use are not doctors. Most have no idea of what they are doing and how much is too much. The grieving father reiterates Alicia’s point: “They don’t know what they are doing and they don’t care.” The mother who lost her son says that now dealers are lacing many drugs with fentanyl, even marijuana. The father finishes the point by saying, “Someone who is buying marijuana may think he is just going to smoke a joint and get high, but unknown to them it has fentanyl in it, and they could die.”

Alicia talks about users and “chasing the dragon.” This refers to the high users first had when trying the drug but can never recapture. The euphoria they first felt can never be attained again and they become addicted. Pamela Mautte, Director of the Valley Substance Abuse Action Council, says, “With fentanyl it is much more deadly. Users do want to stop, but it is much more deadly because of the sickness and the cravings. They are extremely intense.”

Alicia says, “Fentanyl changes the chemistry of the brain.” Fentanyl binds to opioid receptors in the brain. These receptors are highly concentrated in the part of the brain that is responsible for managing pain, pleasure and other emotions. The drug works by increasing the amount of dopamine in the brain which produces the feeling of being high. Once opioid tolerance sets in, opioid dependence and addiction are not far behind. If fentanyl is stopped, the brain struggles to restore balance. When this happens, unpleasant side effects kick in such as cramping, chills, diarrhea and vomiting. This is known as opioid withdrawal syndrome. The mother says that her son, Mike, would say that he had a cold or the flu, but he was really throwing up or in his room shivering. “I knew he was going through opioid withdrawal.” She says she took photos of her son because she wanted him to see what he was doing to himself. “I wanted to wring his neck, but I constantly had to remind myself that that was drugs, that’s not Mike.”

Alicia says that many users become addicted to fentanyl after an addiction to pain medications like oxycodone, which then led them to a cheaper alternative like heroin. And because fentanyl is
even cheaper then heroin, drug dealers push users to fentanyl. But what is worse is that dealers mix the cheaper fentanyl into their heroin.

The mother says that Mike always said everything was good and nothing was going to happen, “but with fentanyl in the picture, one slipup could mean death.” The father emphasizes her point: “One bad choice, one bad batch of heroin that has a few grains more of fentanyl, and you’re dead.”

Back on screen, Alicia says that most of the recent overdoses are now caused by fentanyl-laced heroin. The mother says that the cheap cost of fentanyl creates the draw to lace heroin with it.

Next, viewers see a graphic of how much heroin it takes to kill an adult compared to how much fentanyl. It takes about 30 milligrams of heroin but only 3 milligrams of fentanyl. Alicia points out that fentanyl is so dangerous that when law enforcement officers come into contact with it, they are required to wear hazmat suits because simply touching a few grains of fentanyl can cause death.

Fentanyl kills by slowing the respiratory system. The cardiovascular system, the heart and the lungs all start to shut down. The signs of an overdose are blue or purple lips, blue fingernails or extremities, vomiting, choking, very small pupils, slowed heart rate, difficulty breathing, and unresponsiveness.

Alicia then describes what you must do if you come across someone who has overdosed, the first one being to immediately call 911. If the person is not conscious, try to wake them up. If the person does not wake up, standard CPR should be initiated. Do not initiate rescue breathing because if the user had snorted the drug, you too could be exposed to its toxic effects.

Alicia then describes NARCAN®, a drug that police, firefighters and EMTs use to save lives in people who have overdosed. It can be delivered by injection or used in a nasal spray. NARCAN®, as expert Pamela Mautte describes, can reverse an opioid overdose in some instances. It works by going into the receptors in the brain and pulling out the fentanyl, replacing it with other molecules to block it. It may take multiple doses to work properly.

Alicia says that if fentanyl isn’t scary enough, there is something else that is even worse: carfentanil. It is an offshoot of fentanyl that was created to tranquilize elephants. It is 10,000 times more powerful than morphine and 100 times more powerful than fentanyl. One tiny granule can kill an adult human being. Like fentanyl, carfentanil is used by dealers to lace heroin as well as marijuana. It is almost impossible to detect. NARCAN® is typically not effective in reversing a carfentanil overdose because it is too powerful and fast-acting. The father reveals that the medical examiner had determined that the death of his daughter was caused by heroin laced with fentanyl and carfentanil. “She literally died with a needle in her arm because that’s how fast an overdose of carfentanil can kill you.”

There are many places that can help you, says Ms. Mautte, if you are involved with drugs. You can call your police or local fire department, EMS or first responders. “They are not there to judge you,” she assures viewers. Rather, they are there to direct you to the services you need. You can also reach out to resources in your school system such as a trusted adult, teacher or school counselor. “No one should struggle in silence.”
Alicia says that most people who come in contact with fentanyl don’t have a chance to tell their stories because they die instead. The father says that his daughter, Lauren, endured five overdoses before she died. The mother recalls writing her son’s obituary six times in her head. Once the reality of Mike’s death set in, she laments, “No one can prepare you for that.” The father says tearfully, “My wife called me. She screamed into the phone ‘Lauren is dead.’ The EMTs weren’t even here yet. I couldn’t believe it. I was screaming, ‘No, no, this can’t be real.’” The mother says, “Mike was so funny. He cracked me up. So I miss laughing that belly laugh with him.”

As the video ends, Alicia says that taking an opioid like fentanyl is like “playing an all-or-nothing game of roulette with the odds stacked against you. You just don’t know when, if or how your number will come up. But if it does, it may just be too late.”
The video and print materials in *Fentanyl: The Deadliest Opioid* are compatible with the Performance Indicators of the *National Health Education Standards* (grades 6 – 8) as indicated below.

**National Health Education Standard 1:** Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.

**Performance indicators for grades 6 – 8**

1.8.1 Analyze the relationship between healthy behaviors and personal health.
1.8.2 Describe the interrelationships of emotional, intellectual, physical, and social health in adolescence.
1.8.3 Analyze how the environment affects personal health.
1.8.4 Describe how family history can affect personal health.
1.8.5 Describe ways to reduce or prevent injuries and other adolescent health problems.
1.8.6 Explain how appropriate health care can promote personal health.
1.8.7 Describe the benefits of and barriers to practicing healthy behaviors.
1.8.8 Examine the likelihood of injury or illness if engaging in unhealthy behaviors.
1.8.9 Examine the potential seriousness of injury or illness if engaging in unhealthy behaviors.

**National Health Education Standard 2:** Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.

**Performance indicators for grades 6 – 8**

2.8.1 Examine how the family influences the health of adolescents.
2.8.2 Describe the influence of culture on health beliefs, practices, and behaviors.
2.8.3 Describe how peers influence healthy and unhealthy behaviors.
2.8.4 Analyze how the school and community can affect personal health practices and behaviors.
2.8.5 Analyze how messages from media influence health behaviors.
2.8.6 Analyze the influence of technology on personal and family health.
2.8.7 Explain how the perceptions of norms influence healthy and unhealthy behaviors.
2.8.8 Explain the influence of personal values and beliefs on individual health practices and behaviors.

**National Health Education Standard 3:** Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid information, products, and services to enhance health.

**Performance indicators for grades 6 – 8**

3.8.2 Access valid health information from home, school, and community.
3.8.4 Describe situations that may require professional health services.
National Health Education Standard 4: Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

Performance indicators for grades 6 – 8
4.8.1 Apply effective verbal and nonverbal communication skills to enhance health.
4.8.2 Demonstrate refusal and negotiation skills that avoid or reduce health risks.
4.8.3 Demonstrate effective conflict management or resolution strategies.
4.8.4 Demonstrate how to ask for assistance to enhance the health of self and others.

National Health Education Standard 5: Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.

Performance indicators for grades 6 – 8
5.8.1 Identify circumstances that can help or hinder healthy decision making.
5.8.2 Determine when health-related situations require the application of a thoughtful decision-making process.
5.8.3 Distinguish when individual or collaborative decision making is appropriate.
5.8.5 Predict the potential short-term impact of each alternative on self and others.
5.8.6 Choose healthy alternatives over unhealthy alternatives when making a decision.
5.8.7 Analyze the outcomes of a health-related decision.

National Health Education Standard 6: Students will demonstrate the ability to use goalsetting skills to enhance health.

Performance indicators for grades 6 – 8
6.8.1 Assess personal health practices.
6.8.2 Develop a goal to adopt, maintain, or improve a personal health practice.
6.8.3 Apply strategies and skills needed to attain a personal health goal.
6.8.4 Describe how personal health goals can vary with changing abilities, priorities, and responsibilities.

National Health Education Standard 7: Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.

Performance indicators for grades 6 – 8
7.8.1 Explain the importance of assuming responsibility for personal health behaviors.
7.8.2 Demonstrate healthy practices and behaviors that will maintain or improve the health of self and others.
7.8.3 Demonstrate behaviors to avoid or reduce health risks to self and others.

National Health Education Standard 8: Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.

Performance indicators for grades 6 – 8
8.8.1 State a health-enhancing position on a topic and support it with accurate information.
8.8.2 Demonstrate how to influence and support others to make positive health choices.
The video and print materials in *Fentanyl: The Deadliest Opioid* are compatible with the Performance Indicators of the National Health Education Standards (grades 9 – 12) as indicated below.

**National Health Education Standard 1:** Students will comprehend concepts related to health promotion and disease prevention to enhance health.

**Performance indicators for grades 9 – 12**
1.12.1 Predict how healthy behaviors can affect health status.
1.12.2 Describe the interrelationships of emotional, intellectual, physical, and social health.
1.12.3 Analyze how environment and personal health are interrelated.
1.12.4 Analyze how genetics and family history can impact personal health.
1.12.5 Propose ways to reduce or prevent injuries and health problems.
1.12.6 Analyze the relationship between access to health care and health status.
1.12.7 Compare and contrast the benefits of and barriers to practicing a variety of healthy behaviors.
1.12.8 Analyze personal susceptibility to injury, illness, or death if engaging in unhealthy behaviors.
1.12.9 Analyze the potential severity of injury or illness if engaging in unhealthy behaviors.

**National Health Education Standard 2:** Students will analyze the influence of family, peers, culture, media, technology, and other factors on health behaviors.

**Performance indicators for grades 9 – 12**
2.12.1 Analyze how the family influences the health of individuals.
2.12.2 Analyze how the culture supports and challenges health beliefs, practices, and behaviors.
2.12.3 Analyze how peers influence healthy and unhealthy behaviors.
2.12.4 Evaluate how the school and community can affect personal health practice and behaviors.
2.12.5 Evaluate the effect of media on personal and family health.
2.12.6 Evaluate the impact of technology on personal, family, and community health.
2.12.7 Analyze how the perceptions of norms influence healthy and unhealthy behaviors.
2.12.8 Analyze the influence of personal values and beliefs on individual health practices and behaviors.

**National Health Education Standard 3:** Students will demonstrate the ability to access valid information, products, and services to enhance health.

**Performance indicators for grades 9 – 12**
3.12.2 Use resources from home, school, and community that provide valid health information.
3.12.4 Determine when professional health services may be required.

**National Health Education Standard 4:** Students will demonstrate the ability to use interpersonal communication skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.

**Performance indicators for grades 9 – 12**
4.12.1 Use skills for communicating effectively with family, peers, and others to enhance health.
4.12.2 Demonstrate refusal, negotiation, and collaboration skills to enhance health and avoid or reduce health risks.
4.12.3 Demonstrate strategies to prevent, manage, or resolve interpersonal conflicts without harming self or others.
4.12.4 Demonstrate how to ask for and offer assistance to enhance the health of self and others.

**National Health Education Standard 5:** Students will demonstrate the ability to use decision-making skills to enhance health.

**Performance indicators for grades 9 – 12**
5.12.1 Examine barriers that can hinder healthy decision making.
5.12.2 Determine the value of applying a thoughtful decision-making process in health-related situations.
5.12.3 Justify when individual or collaborative decision making is appropriate.
5.12.5 Predict the potential short-term and long-term impact of each alternative on self and others.
5.12.6 Defend the healthy choice when making decisions.
5.12.7 Evaluate the effectiveness of health-related decisions.

**National Health Education Standard 6:** Students will demonstrate the ability to use goal-setting skills to enhance health.

**Performance indicators for grades 9 – 12**
6.12.1 Assess personal health practices and overall health status.
6.12.2 Develop a plan to attain a personal health goal that addresses strengths, needs, and risks.
6.12.3 Implement strategies and monitor progress in achieving a personal health goal.
6.12.4 Formulate an effective long-term personal health plan.

**National Health Education Standard 7:** Students will demonstrate the ability to practice health-enhancing behaviors and avoid or reduce health risks.

**Performance indicators for grades 9 – 12**
7.12.1 Analyze the role of individual responsibility for enhancing health.
7.12.2 Demonstrate a variety of healthy practices and behaviors that will maintain or improve the health of self and others.
7.12.3 Demonstrate a variety of behaviors to avoid or reduce health risks to self and others.

**National Health Education Standard 8:** Students will demonstrate the ability to advocate for personal, family, and community health.

**Performance indicators for grades 9 – 12**
8.12.1 Utilize accurate peer and societal norms to formulate a health-enhancing message.
8.12.2 Demonstrate how to influence and support others to make positive health choices.