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Illinois Church Action on Alcohol & Addiction Problems

Fentanyl Alert - March 16, 2023



NEW CHICAGO DEA BOSS TAKES AIM AT 'AWFUL, TERRIBLE' FENTANYL SCOURGE

She said her top goal is to fight Mexico's Sinaloa and Jalisco New Generation cartels, which supply Chicago with fentanyl, heroin, cocaine, methamphetamine and marijuana.

Fentanyl, which is 50 times more potent than heroin, is often mixed with heroin, methamphetamine and other drugs and sometimes pressed into counterfeit pills that look like Adderall, ecstasy and other drugs.

As a result, there's been a rising number of overdose deaths attributed to fentanyl in the Chicago area and around the country. Last year, more than 1,700 deaths in Cook County were linked to fentanyl, according to the Cook County medical examiner's office.

"It's everywhere, this awful, terrible challenge of fentanyl," Lyons said. "It's in every suburb. It's in every corner of the city. It's in every state in the union. It's like nothing I've ever seen in my 30 years in law enforcement."

Besides targeting drug cartels, Lyons is a cheerleader for the DEA's national campaign to educate parents, teachers, coaches, professors and other adults who have influence over young people that "one pill can kill."

Her two teenage sons have told her how they could easily get prescription pills like Percocet or Xanax online. Such pills often are fakes laced with fentanyl, methamphetamine and other drugs.

"I'm hyper-aware that my family and my sons are just as vulnerable as anyone to fall into this situation," Lyons said.

More than a decade ago, Lyons supervised a team that identified Sinaloa Cartel kingpin Joaquín "El Chapo" Guzmán

Loera's networks throughout Illinois. She said she learned how sophisticated the cartel was in managing its business, from having people who scouted warehouses for drugs to accountants who tracked the cash to strategists who analyzed U.S. pharmaceutical trends and representatives who dealt with the street gangs distributing the product.

Asked whether the DEA is waiting for China to collaborate with the United States in trying to stop precursor drug-making chemicals from being shipped from China to Mexico — chemicals that help produce fentanyl and methamphetamine — Lyons said, "That would be a fair thing to say. We're always hopeful and open to any type of cooperation and collaboration."
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