

# Fentanyl Test Strips: A grassroots initiative

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**Great Lakes PTTC**  
**June 8, 2021**

# Brought To You By:



The Great Lakes ATTC, MHTTC, and PTTC are funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) under the following cooperative agreements:

Great Lakes ATTC: 1H79TI080207-03

Great Lakes MHTTC: 1H79SM-081733-01

Great Lakes PTTC: 1H79SP081002-01

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January 2021

The use of affirming language inspires hope.

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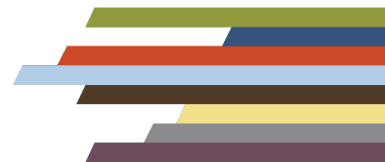
LANGUAGE MATTERS.

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**Words have power.**

PEOPLE FIRST.

The PTTC Network uses affirming language to promote the application of evidence-based and culturally informed practices.



# Thank You for Joining Us!

## A few housekeeping items:

- If you are having technical issues, please individually message Kristina Spannbauer or Stephanie Behlman in the chat section and they will be happy to assist you.
- Please put any questions for the speaker or comments in the Q & A section, also at the bottom of the screen. We will respond to questions during the presentation.
- We will be using automated transcription for this webinar

# Thank You for Joining Us!

A few more housekeeping items:

- You will be directed to a link at the end of the presentation to a very short survey – we would really appreciate it if you could fill it out. It takes about 3 minutes.
- We are recording this session and it will be available on our website in a couple of weeks.
- Certificates of attendance will be sent out to all who attended the full session. They will take about 2 weeks.

A close-up photograph of several social media icons on white, 3D keyboard keys. The icons include Pinterest (red circle with white 'P'), Snapchat (yellow square with white ghost), Instagram (purple and pink gradient camera icon), Facebook (blue square with white 'f'), and Twitter (blue bird). The keys are arranged in a grid, with some keys partially visible and others more prominent. The background is a light gray surface.

## Follow Us On Social Media!

Facebook and Twitter:

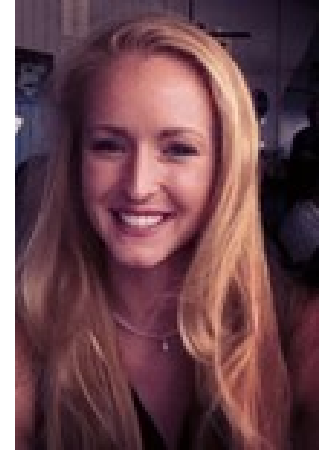
- @GreatLakesATTC
- @GMhttc
- @GLPTTC

# Speaker Introductions



Beth Zietlow-DeJesus

Rebekah Wiland



Madison Greenspan  
AKA - Superhero

Waverly Willis





# Fentanyl Test Strips

## A grassroots initiative

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# Why Use Fentanyl Test Strips?



- ▶ Anyone using illicit drugs - heroin, powdered cocaine, crack - can use these strips to see if the drugs they bought contain fentanyl and make an informed decision about using that drug.
- ▶ Many cocaine users do not have a tolerance for opioids, especially not an opioid as strong as Fentanyl.
- ▶ A very small amount of Fentanyl can stop someone from breathing. The receptors in the brain that opioids bind to can impact the respiratory system.
- ▶ That's why the ADAMHS Board, along with its partners, are distributing fentanyl test strips throughout Cuyahoga County.
- ▶ The fentanyl test strips we use identify 12 analogs including the even more deadly Carfentanil. **They cost \$1.00 each.**

# How Fentanyl Test Strips Work



<https://youtu.be/INSdu-Rlyfk>

# Research on Fentanyl Test Strip Program

- ▶ Johns Hopkins School of Public Health study indicated:
  - ▶ 86% of drug users would use fentanyl test strips
  - ▶ 84% are concerned about fentanyl
  - ▶ 70% would change use behaviors

# Data Driven Approach

- ▶ Received data from the local DEA and other partners where fatal and non-fatal overdoses occurred
- ▶ Targeted those locations by reaching out to local businesses and distributing test strips within 1,000 feet of those locations
- ▶ 75+ entities to date have been given test strips including local businesses, government agencies, treatment providers, homeless service providers, hospitals, religious centers, and advocates within the community.

# FTS as a Harm Reduction Method in Cuyahoga County

- ▶ **PILOT (2018)** - The ADAMHS Board provided 15,000 test strips to Circle Health Services to pass out at its clinic and on the syringe exchange van. Initial survey results showed that nearly 60% of individuals changed their use behavior when fentanyl first came to the streets. That program has passed out tens of thousands of test strips since it started.
- ▶ **INCREASING ACCESS (2019)** - The ADAMHS Board provided a \$15,000 grant for test strips to Care Alliance Health Center to distribute at their Medical Clinics and with outreach workers.

# Grassroots Program



- ▶ In May 2019, Cuyahoga had 41 deaths in one month - 39 were the result of fentanyl in cocaine. Cuyahoga County gave the ADAMHS Board funding to purchase 15,000 test strips to pass out in a grassroots campaign.
- ▶ We contacted community partners and did a targeted radio and digital outreach campaign to areas with highest OD incidence.
- ▶ Deaths dropped to 24 in June and 28 in July. Because of the success of the program, \$60,000 in funding was allocated for grassroots distribution to continue in 2020.
- ▶ The Grassroots Program will continue in 2021 with 15,000 distributed strips per quarter.

# Grassroots Program - COVID

- ▶ In March 2020, grassroots distribution halted. Local deaths had also dropped significantly.
- ▶ In May 2020, when things opened back up we saw 52 deaths in Cuyahoga County.
- ▶ MetroHealth, a local county hospital, established a Harm Reduction RV and we gave strips to them.
- ▶ When calling locations, businesses became reluctant to agree to strips. So, we put boots on the ground in high OD areas.
- ▶ The ADAMHS Board continues to utilize the most up-to-date data on non-fatal overdoses for distribution.



# Metro RV Survey Results:

- ▶ 3,894 Fentanyl test strips were distributed from August 2020 to December 2020
- ▶ 56 people reported back that they tested their drugs
- ▶ 83% of tests were positive
- ▶ 59% of clients who had a positive test strip reported they changed their use behavior

# Treatment Provider Testimonial:



Rebekah Wiland, MSW, LISW-S,  
FrontLine Service

“Having these so readily available has done A LOT for our agency’s ability to increase our capacity to meet clients where they are, without judgement. They help us engage individuals who are often hesitant to share their substance use issues. They know we value them as a human and will continue to serve them while they navigate the best way to manage their substance use. This may seem small to some people, but I cannot stress enough that knowledge is power and that leads to empowered clients...

“I am so thankful for this resource... I can't give you quantitative numbers around how many people used them or if it saved their lives, but there is no doubt in my little social worker heart that having these directly available, without strings attached, has played a major role in changing the stigma and will have long term, positive effects on the ways in which clients can seek help.”

# Community Partner Testimonial:



Waverly Willis, Founder and President of The Urban Barber Association and Owner of Urban Kutz Barbershops

“I didn’t hesitate to say yes when the Alcohol, Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services Board of Cuyahoga County asked me to hand out free fentanyl test strips at my Urban Kutz barbershops.

“As a person who struggled with alcohol and drug use, who has been in recovery for more than a decade, I knew that for some drug users, the test strips could mean the difference between life and death.

“I’ve gotten feedback from drug users who said they tossed out their drugs after discovering it also contained fentanyl. I remember being at that point – a crossroads – where I was thinking I could possibly die from drugs and fentanyl wasn’t even out there when I was using.”

# Community Partners

- ▶ Barbershops have been a success in distributing fentanyl test strips and information about getting help
- ▶ Local gas stations, delis, and independent businesses have come on board to help in our grassroots efforts
- ▶ Most partners are willing to display the test strips on their front counter or other accessible locations
- ▶ One barrier we still face is stigma, the negative perception about people that use drugs

# Barriers

- ▶ **Stigma**, the negative perception about people who use drugs:
  - ▶ Talking to partners helps bridge the gap and addresses stigma
  - ▶ Community partners, family members and people in recovery have helped us get new partners and address stigma
- ▶ **Corporate Locations:**
  - ▶ Managers in local restaurants, hotels and pharmacies are interested in the program. However, they struggle to get approval from corporate managers
  - ▶ Advocacy is required to address this barrier
- ▶ **UPDATE - Grant Funding:**
  - ▶ Many grants will not allow for the purchase of harm reduction materials. **UPDATE: SAMHSA now allows the purchase of fentanyl test strips with grant dollars!**

# Questions?

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# Resources

- ▶ [Fentanyl Executive Summary - March 2018](#)
- ▶ [Fentanyl One Pager - August 2018](#)
- ▶ [Test Strip Field Assessment - September 2019](#)