



MONTEREY—
—**COUNTY**
OFFICE of EDUCATION

Dr. Deneen Guss
County Superintendent of Schools

May 15, 2024

The Honorable Stephanie E. Hulsey
Judge of the Superior Court
c/o Office of the County Counsel
Attn: Sandra Ontiveros
168 W. Alisal Street, 3rd Floor
Salinas, CA 93901

RE: Response to the 2023-2024 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report - "FENTANYL: OUR YOUTH IN CRISIS"

Dear Honorable Judge Hulsey:

The Monterey County Office Education team members and I have carefully reviewed and considered the Findings and Recommendations set forth in the 2023-2024 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report entitled, "FENTANYL: OUR YOUTH IN CRISIS." This letter shall serve as the official response of the County Superintendent to the Findings and Recommendations of the Monterey County Civil Grand Jury.

We thank you for the opportunity to review and respond to the findings and recommendations of the 2023-2024 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report. We would also like to extend a thank you to the Grand Jury for their thorough review and recognition of the efforts of the educational community in response to the fentanyl crisis. The Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) and the Monterey County school districts remain committed to providing the highest quality education for Monterey County students.

Sincerely,

Deneen Guss, Ed.D.
Monterey County Superintendent of Schools

Response to the 2023-2024 Monterey County Civil Grand Jury Final Report

Findings

F1. The Monterey County Safe and Healthy Schools and Communities Coalition and the Montage Health Prescribe Safe Initiative are leaders in the County’s drug awareness and prevention efforts. A formal agreement between these two entities could enhance effectiveness and ensure partnership continuity.

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY AGREE**
- DISAGREE**

Response:

The County Superintendent agrees with this finding and will initiate a formal memorandum of understanding to outline how the two entities will continue to work together to maintain current partnerships and services, and look for opportunities for continuous improvement to accelerate and strengthen future efforts.

F3. The lack of the availability of a wellness space within County public schools, either a designated room or a separate building, staffed with at least one mental health professional, is a missed opportunity to address mental health needs.

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY AGREE**
- DISAGREE**

Response:

The County Superintendent agrees with this finding and would like to clarify that, while a wellness space or center is most conducive to making mental health support easily accessible, any space will work as long as it allows for privacy between a student and the mental health provider. Students who receive mental health support on school campuses may find it more comfortable and normalized, which helps to reduce the stigma that can be associated with receiving mental health support. The ability for schools to be able to provide at least one mental health professional will be dependent upon availability of mental health professionals in our county and their willingness to travel to rural schools, availability of funding for mental health professionals, and of course the availability of space on school campuses.

F4. Since the implementation of SB10 in January 2024, some school districts have not revised their safety plans to include overdose response protocols, risking the health and safety of students.

- AGREE**
- PARTIALLY AGREE**
- DISAGREE**

Response:

The County Superintendent agrees with this finding.

- F5. While peer-to-peer and youth student leadership programs supporting drug awareness and prevention education are successful tools for student engagement on this topic, some schools have not implemented these programs, putting students at risk.**

AGREE
 PARTIALLY AGREE
 DISAGREE

Response:

The County Superintendent agrees that peer-to-peer and youth student leadership programs can be very effective in engaging students and helping to raise the awareness of the dangers of drug use.

Recommendations

- R1. MCOE and the MHPS formalize their partnership through a written agreement to ensure ongoing collaborative leadership by August 31, 2024.**

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED
 HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE
 REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS
 WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED

Response:

The County Superintendent desires to continue the strong collaboration between MCOE and Prescribe Safe and has initiated a formal memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the two entities. It is currently being reviewed by Prescribe Safe. We note, however, that the adoption of an MOU is dependent on Prescribe Safe's willingness to enter into such an agreement.

- R4. MCOE develops strategies with school districts for implementation of on-campus wellness spaces with appropriate staff to support students with their mental health and/or drug awareness by November 30, 2024.**

HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED
 HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE
 REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS
 WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED

Response:

The Monterey County Office of Education is committed to assisting districts to strategize methods to develop on-campus wellness spaces with appropriate staff to support students with their mental health and/or drug awareness by November 30, 2024. In fact, we will make this the topic for a future Monterey County Safe and Healthy Schools and Communities Coalition training series and will share at the Superintendents' Council. We will invite schools that already have wellness spaces operating to share how they created their wellness spaces and how they have staffed these spaces, among other strategies.

R5. MCOE requires that all school districts comply with SB10, by updating school safety plans with overdose prevention, response protocols, and staff training by October 31, 2024.

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED**
- HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE**
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS**
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED**

Response:

The Monterey County Office of Education included the language required by SB10 in all of our school and program Comprehensive Safe School Plans immediately after the legislation was implemented, and we will once again share this language with all schools in Monterey County, as well as provide a training on the specific language and protocols of SB10 at a future Monterey County Safe and Healthy Schools and Communities meeting.

R6. MCOE ensures that all educational spaces in every district are equipped with Naloxone, known as Narcan, for use by trained staff in an opioid overdose emergency by August 31, 2024.

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED**
- HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE**
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS**
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED**

Response:

Education Code 49414.3 states:

“(a) School districts, county offices of education, and charter schools may provide emergency naloxone hydrochloride or another opioid antagonist to school nurses or trained personnel who have volunteered pursuant to subdivision (d), and school nurses or trained personnel may use naloxone hydrochloride or another opioid antagonist to provide emergency medical aid to persons suffering, or reasonably believed to be suffering, from an opioid overdose.”

The Monterey County Office of Education (MCOE) has been offering Monterey County schools as much Narcan, and supplemental training, as requested. The MCOE will continue to survey schools for Narcan needs and provide, as necessary, to trained personnel as per their policies and procedures. While it will be difficult to ensure that every educational space in every district has Narcan, as this goes well beyond what the law requires (ref: Education Code 49414.3), the MCOE remains committed to providing Narcan and appropriate training for personnel who have volunteered to administer Narcan.

R7. MCOE develop a training program and resources for district personnel to implement peer-to-peer and youth leadership programs by December 31, 2024.

- HAS BEEN IMPLEMENTED**
- HAS NOT BEEN IMPLEMENTED BUT WILL BE IMPLEMENTED IN THE FUTURE**
- REQUIRES FURTHER ANALYSIS**
- WILL NOT BE IMPLEMENTED**

Response:

The Monterey County Office of Education will host a training session and will develop resources for district personnel to implement peer-to-peer and youth leadership programs by December 31, 2024. We will ensure that these resources are available on the Monterey County Safe Schools and Communities Coalition website.