



PENNSYLVANIA EMERGENCY  
HEALTH SERVICES COUNCIL  
*Your Voice In EMS*

### RECOMMENDATION FOR CONSIDERATION

Board [Executive Committee] Meeting Date: April 18, 2023

Subject: Fentanyl Test Strips

VTR#: 0423-01

Committee/Task Force: Medical Advisory

Recommended Goal

Recommended Policy Change

Other:

#### **Recommendation:**

**The Medical Advisory Committee recommends the Bureau of EMS issue an EMS Information Bulletin to provide guidance to licensed EMS agencies who wish to engage in harm reduction activities through the distribution of test strips for substances of abuse, including, but not limited to Fentanyl.**

#### **Rationale [Background]:**

On November 3, 2022, Act 111 was signed into law by Governor Tom Wolf. The act amends the Controlled Substances Act of 1972 by clarifying the definition of “drug paraphernalia” to exclude testing products utilized in determining substances or hazardous compounds which can cause physical harm or death. This includes, but is not limited to, fentanyl test strips.

Test strip results are not quantitative in nature, but merely indicate the presence of the indicated substance or compound. While they are subject to FDA approval, the intent of this recommendation is community outreach, not for the diagnosis or treatment by EMS of a patient with a suspected overdose.

At the April 12, 2023, meeting of the PEHSC medical advisory committee, Dr. Crawford Mechem, Philadelphia Regional Medical Director, presented this topic and noted that much of the substances of abuse seen in the Philadelphia region now contains some level of fentanyl. In addition to fentanyl, the presence of xylazine is becoming more prevalent. A targeted test strip for xylazine is currently in development. The Philadelphia Fire Department and other interested EMS agencies, desire to distribute test strips in targets sections of their primary response area as part of their harm reduction effort.

#### **Medical Review [Concerns]:**

The medical advisory committee supports the efforts of EMS agencies who engage in harm reduction strategies in their communities, including the distribution of test strips for substances of abuse.

#### **Fiscal Concerns:**

None.

#### **Educational Concerns:**

None.

**Plan of Implementation:**

The Department should issue an EMS Information Bulletin to provide guidance to EMS agencies who wish to engage in harm reduction activities through the distribution of fentanyl [and other] test strips.

The PEHSC Committee/Task Force offers consultation to the Department in regard to the content of this Vote to Recommend (VTR) and its attached documents. The PEHSC Committee/Task Force specifically offers staff or member support to participate in Department deliberations regarding this recommendation in an effort to convey committee/task force discussions.

**Board Meeting [Executive Committee] Comments/Concerns:**

None.



Signed: \_\_\_\_\_  
President

April 18, 2023  
Date \_\_\_\_\_

---

For PEHSC Use Only – PA Department of Health Response

Accept: \_\_\_\_ Table: \_\_\_\_ Modify: \_\_\_\_ Reject: \_\_\_\_

Comments:

Date of Department Response: \_\_\_\_\_