



John Bel Edwards
Governor

State of Louisiana

OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
DRUG POLICY

Kristy Miller
Director

Dr. Shayla Polk
Prevention Systems Manager

DRUG POLICY BOARD
April 27, 2023; 10:00 AM - 12:00 PM

MINUTES

Call to Order

Kristy Miller, Director of the Governor's Office of Drug Policy and Chair of the Drug Policy Board, called the meeting to order at 10:04AM

Welcome and Introductions

Kristy moved on to introductions. Kristy did a roll call for Voting and Of-Counsel members seated around the table. She then asked Voting and Of-Counsel members to introduce themselves. Then, stakeholders and members of the public were introduced. After introductions, she announced quorum was achieved. A list of all members and stakeholders who attended the meeting is included at the end of this document.

Old Business

- *Review and approve minutes from previous meeting*

Kristy asked everyone to refer to the minutes that were emailed prior to the meeting. While doing that, she reminded everyone that a copy of the minutes were in their packets. After a moment of silence to review, Kristy asked if there were any edits or amendments to be made. Hearing none, Ed Carlson with a private organization involved in substance abuse prevention, made a motion to approve. Rebecca Chaisson with Louisiana State Police Crime Lab, seconded the motion. Vote by voice was made. All who were present agreed with the motion. None disagreed. None abstained.

New Business

- *Presentations with open discussions The Latest Potent Drug Threats: ISO, a Horse Tranquilizer, and a SE Asian herb, plus Solutions to Address*
 - A. Isotoniazene, a dangerous new synthetic opioid drug – George Singletary, MD Assistant Professor of Addiction Medicine at Tulane University School of Medicine. Also serves as the Associate Program Director for the Addiction Medicine Fellowship at Tulane School of Medicine.**

Dr. Singletary gave an overview of the Synthetic opioid Isotoniazene. He shared that China was the main source country for Isotoniazene and the US restrictions on Chinese Fentanyl analogs are not applicable. He identified how Isotoniazene is pressed into pills resembling 8mg hydromorphone tablets. He further noted that Naloxone is effective but may require additional dose. He also shared the following:

- Nov 2019 = 40-50 isotonitazene related deaths

- 6 deaths per month from June-August 2019
- Isotonitazene not an approved pharmaceutical for use ANYWHERE in world
- 6/2020 = Temporary order placing it in schedule 1 Category
- Prior to this temporary order, it was treated as an ANALOGUE of etonitazene (ALREADY a schedule 1 substance)

B. *Xylazine: The Horse Tranquilizer Used to Cut Fentanyl and Heroin – Dr. Shayla Polk, Prevention Systems Manager, Office of Drug Policy*

Dr Shayla Polk, the Prevention Systems Manager with the Office of Drug Policy gave a on Xylazine, a horse tranquilizer. She emphasized that Xylazine is exclusively approved for veterinary use by the FDA and is not authorized for human consumption. Due to its potential to cause respiratory failure and the development of flesh-rotting sores, Xylazine has been deemed unsafe for humans. Shockingly, it has been discovered that individuals have started using Xylazine to adulterate fentanyl and heroin, leading to an alarming rise in its misuse. Commonly referred to as "tranq," "tranq dope," or "zombie drug," Xylazine is available in powder, liquid, or crystalline form and is often combined with fentanyl. When mixed with heroin and cocaine, it is known as a speedball. Its effects are rapid and can last for more than eight hours. Xylazine is known by various street names, including Collateral Damage, Cardi B, 550 Rampage, Black Mask, Trashcan, and Steph Curry. Routine toxicology screens cannot detect Xylazine, requiring specialized testing, which is inconsistently available across the United States. The US Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) has issued a warning regarding the "widespread threat" posed by Xylazine, highlighting potentially lethal consequences in 48 states where it has been identified. Additionally, Xylazine has been found in exhibits across all four US census regions. Disturbingly, the mixture of Xylazine and fentanyl has seen a significant surge, with a 1,127% increase in the South, 750% increase in the West, 516% increase in the Midwest, and a 103% increase in the North.

Regenerate response

Dr. Polk provided several significant updates regarding Xylazine. Firstly, she shared that on November 8, 2022, the FDA alerted healthcare professionals about the risks associated with patients exposed to Xylazine in illicit drugs. Furthermore, on March 20, 2023, the US Drug Enforcement Administration issued a public health alert specifically concerning Xylazine-laced fentanyl. Congress also took action by introducing the Combating Illicit Xylazine Act on March 29, 2023, which aimed to classify Xylazine as a Schedule III substance. The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy officially recognized fentanyl adulterated with Xylazine as an emerging threat to the United States on April 12, 2023. At the federal level, the ONDCP announced the formation of an interagency working group to develop a national response plan. This plan includes various components such as Xylazine testing, treatment and supportive care protocols, comprehensive data systems, strategies to reduce illicit supply, and rapid research on the interactions between Xylazine and fentanyl. On the state level, multiple states have already scheduled or are considering scheduling Xylazine. For example, Louisiana's HB 106 would classify Xylazine as a Schedule II substance under the state's Controlled Dangerous Substances Law.

C. *Kratom aka "Gas Station Heroin" - Dr. Shayla Polk, Prevention Systems Manager, Office of Drug Policy*

Dr. Shayla Polk presented on the Kratom, a Herb derived from the *Mitragyna speciosa* evergreen tree, which has gained popularity as a natural, plant-based dietary supplement due to its claimed therapeutic properties. Dr. Polk shared that Kratom is available in various forms, including leaves, powder, capsules, vape oil, and liquid, and is sold under different names based on strain type and color, with street names such as thang, kakuam, thom, ketum, and biak. However, it is important to note that the dietary and therapeutic claims associated with Kratom are not supported by scientific evidence. The products are unregulated and non-standardized, despite being marketed as a dietary supplement for pain relief, mood improvement, and energy boosting. Dr. Polk further stated, Kratom can have effects

similar to heroin, sometimes even stronger, and when taken in high doses, it can lead to opiate-like effects, psychotic symptoms, and dependence. The substance is associated with dangerous side effects, including nausea, vomiting, constipation, increased aggression, hallucinations, delusions, and thyroid problems. Taking large doses of Kratom can result in breathing difficulties, brain swelling, seizures, liver damage, and even death. The FDA has issued warnings and conducted seizures of Kratom products, and the DEA temporarily classified Kratom as a Schedule I drug but later reversed its decision due to public backlash. Some states and municipalities have regulated Kratom or its components, with some banning its possession, sale, and manufacturing, while others control its psychoactive components as controlled substances. Attempts to pass legislation at the state level to schedule Kratom as a controlled substance have previously failed.

Overall, Dr. Polk emphasized that Kratom is a potentially risky product for consumers due to its lack of standardization and regulation. Its effects can be unpredictable and severe, with the potential for addiction and withdrawal symptoms. The substance has been associated with adverse health effects and has even been implicated in unintentional drug overdoses and deaths. While some individuals use Kratom as an alternative to traditional opioids, it can lead to additional dependence and pose significant health risks.

D. What's Next? Gray Death (an unfortunate teaser on what's ahead) - Dr. Shayla Polk, Prevention Systems Manager, Office of Drug Policy

Dr. Polk gave a sneak peek into a possible presentation for the Drug Policy Board. She shared that Gray Death, was a dangerous drug combination composed of heroin, fentanyl, and carfentanil or U-47700 (Pink). She shared that the drug started appearing in certain regions towards the end of 2016 and early 2017 and has gained popularity due to its affordability. Gray Death can be created using whatever ingredients are available and can be found in larger rock-like chunks or as a gray concrete mixing powder.

Dr. Polk emphasized that Gray Death poses a severe risk of overdose. Symptoms of a Gray Death overdose include pinpoint or constricted pupils, unresponsiveness or limb weakness in the individual, an awake but unable to talk state, slow or erratic breathing or pulse, a bluish or grayish color around the fingernails and lips, and deep, slow snoring, choking, or gurgling sounds. Tragically, death can occur as a result of a Gray Death overdose.

E. 2023 Legislative Session: Tracking drug policy related bills – Kristy Miller, MPA Director, Office of Drug Policy

Kristy Miller, informed all attendees that included in their packet was the entire list of bills that the Drug Policy Board was tracking. She shared that she would not be covering all the bills but wanted to give brief update on specific bills that were being tracked. The bills include the following:

- **Alcohol**
 - HB 433: Authorizes the sale of ice cream as an alcoholic beverage with low and high alcoholic content
 - HB 517: Authorizes Class "R" restaurant permit holders to sell alcoholic beverages for off-premise consumption if prepared with an appropriate lid or cover on the container
 - SB 194: Prohibits persons under the age of twenty-one from entering and working at certain establishments (Class A retail liquor permits)
- Opioids/Fentanyl

- HB 75: Increases the penalties for distribution or possession w/intent to distribute fentanyl or carfentanil; provides for aggregate weights
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- HB 90: Provides relative to penalties for distribution or possession with intent to distribute fentanyl or carfentanil
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- HB 586: Provides for civil liability for actions related to fentanyl
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- SB 49: provides increased penalties for the creation or operation of a clandestine lab for the unlawful manufacture of a substance containing fentanyl or carfentanil
- Marijuana
 - HB 17: Provides for the regulation of the cultivation, manufacture, and retail sale of cannabis and cannabis products
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 - HB 24: Decriminalizes the possession and distribution of marijuana contingent upon legislative enactment of a statutory regulatory system and establishment of a sales tax
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 - HB 620: Levies a tax on retail sales of cannabis and dedicates revenues derived from the tax
- Hemp
 - HB 574: Creates advertising and marketing regulations and restrictions for industrial hemp, adult-use consumable hemp products, and consumable hemp products
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 - HB 605: Provides for the regulation of consumable hemp products
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 - SB 219: Provides relative to industrial hemp

F. Public Comments – following presentations

Other Business

G. Office of Drug Policy updates

Kristy stated that the Office of Drug Policy had no additional updates but would continue to track legislation bills.

H. Member agency updates

- Warren Montgomery gave an update on the 22nd Judicial program that allows individuals with drug possession charges to see a mental health expert with has a background in substance use within 72 hours. The individual is then given the chance to plead guilty but must be willing to participate on mental health/substance use treatment at a facility that offers these services. The goal is to reduce jail time for individuals who have substance use issues and increase their participation in mental health/substance use services to get them the help they need.
- Dr. Hussey shared that the HOPE Report was out and available to the public and that the next HOPE council meeting would be June 8, 2023.

- Dr. Kanter Shared that Medicaid paused eligibility reviews during the Pandemic on a federal level but now it has restarted in all states including Louisiana. This review process is also called Medicaid “renewal,” redetermination” or “recertification” process.
- Kristy Miller shared that a 988 card had been attached to all packets and reminded them that 988 is new Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

Public Comments

Lonnie shared,

- Dr. Freeman added that 988 is required on the back of all student ID cards and if anyone knows of school that do not have the 988 number on the back of their cards, let her know and she will work to make sure they get 988 on their student’s ID.

Upcoming Meetings

Kristy informed everyone the Drug Policy next meeting was scheduled for July 27th at 10:00 AM.

Adjournment

Kristy Miller thanked the attendees for their participation. Meeting was adjourned at 12:00 PM

MEETING ATTENDEES

VOTING MEMBERS

Member Agency	Appointee/Designee	In Attendance
Alcohol industry representative	Mr. Cody Thompson	Yes
Attorney General's Office	Chris Alderman	No
Board of Pharmacy	Joe Fontenot	Yes
District Court Judge	Scott Schlegel	No
Federal agency with AOD ed/ treat/prev responsibilities	Vacant	--
Governor's Office of Drug Policy	Kristy Miller	Yes
House member, Committee on Health and Welfare	Representative Bob Owen	No
Louisiana Commission on Alcohol and Other Drug Abuse	Vacant/Comm does not exist	--
Louisiana Commission on Law Enforcement	Linda Gautier	Yes
Louisiana Department of Children and Family Services	Daniel Doyle	Yes
Louisiana Department of Education	Michael Comeaux	No
Louisiana Department of Health	Quenetta Womack	Yes
Louisiana Department of Public Safety and Corrections	Blake LeBlanc	Yes
Louisiana District Attorneys Association	Warren Montgomery	Yes
Louisiana Highway Safety Commission	Lisa Freeman	Yes
Louisiana Office of Alcohol & Tobacco Control	Ernest Legier	No
Louisiana Public Defenders Board	Remy Starns	No
Louisiana Sheriffs' Association	Shannon Dirmann	No
Louisiana State Police	Rebecca Chiasson	Yes
National Guard	Lt. Colonel Beverly Couto	Yes
Physician	Dr. Joseph Kanter	Yes
Private organization involved in SA prevention	Edward Carlson	Yes
Senate member, Committee on Health and Welfare	Senator Gerald Boudreaux	No

OF-COUNSEL MEMBERS

Member Agency	Appointee/Designee	In Attendance
LA State Board of Medical Examiners	Dr. Vincent Culotta	No
Advisory Council on Heroin and Opioid Prevention and Education	Dr. Jim Hussey	Yes
Drug Enforcement Administration, NOLA Office	Steve Hofer	Yes
Gulf Coast High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area	Greg Lowther	No
Tunnel of Hope Foundation	Dr. Dan Schneider	No

STAFF

Shayla Polk, Governor's Office

GUESTS

Joey Jones – North LA Crime Lab

Jules Edwards - JOC

Kody Thompson – Alcohol Industry

Lonnie Granier, Odyssey House Louisiana

David McKay - LDH – Legal

Steve Hofer – DEA

Jacqueline Sanchez - LDAA

Aimee Moles - LSU

Ashley Tillison - LSU

Leslie Freeman – OBH

Taylor Chrisman- House Committee Attorney

Shelley Edgerton- Department of Corrections