

FLORIDA HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

BILL ANALYSIS

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BILL #: [HB 259](#)

TITLE: Special Observances

SPONSOR(S): Gerwig

COMPANION BILL: [SB 214](#) (Polsky)

LINKED BILLS: None

RELATED BILLS: None

Committee References

[Human Services](#)

17 Y, 0 N



[Government Operations](#)

17 Y, 0 N



[Health & Human Services](#)

24 Y, 0 N

SUMMARY

Effect of the Bill:

The bill designates August 21 of each year as “Fentanyl Awareness and Education Day” to increase awareness of the dangers of fentanyl and the potential for overdoses.

Fiscal or Economic Impact:

The bill will have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on the Department of Health and no fiscal impact on local government.

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ANALYSIS

EFFECT OF THE BILL:

[Chapter 683](#), F.S., recognizes legal holidays and special observance days in Florida. Current law does not recognize a special observance day for fentanyl awareness. [Fentanyl](#) is an extremely potent synthetic opioid that is typically used to treat patients with severe pain. Due to the potency of fentanyl, compared to other opioids, there is an increased risk of overdose and death.

The bill designates August 21 of each year as “Fentanyl Awareness and Education Day,” a [special observance](#) to increase awareness of the dangers of fentanyl and the potential for overdoses. The bill encourages the Department of Health (DOH), the Department of Children and Families (DCF), local governments, public schools, and other agencies to sponsor events to promote awareness of the dangers of fentanyl and potential overdoses, including, but not limited to, education on the prevention of fentanyl abuse and addiction; the availability of local school and community resources for drug prevention and any processes involved in accessing those resources; and health issues, including information about substance use and abuse, specifically youth substance use and abuse. (Section [1](#))

The effective date of the bill is July 1, 2025. (Section [2](#))

FISCAL OR ECONOMIC IMPACT:

STATE GOVERNMENT:

The bill will have an indeterminate negative fiscal impact on DOH. DOH will incur minimal costs associated with hosting events recognizing Fentanyl Awareness and Education Day. The agency anticipates that these costs may be absorbed within existing agency resources.

STORAGE NAME: h0259e.HHS

DATE: 3/24/2025

RELEVANT INFORMATION

SUBJECT OVERVIEW:

Opioids

Opioids are psychoactive substances derived from the opium poppy, or their synthetic analogues.¹ Opioids are highly effective pain relievers, and as such are commonly used to treat acute and chronic pain. An individual experiences pain because of a series of electrical and chemical exchanges across the individual's peripheral nerves, spinal cord, and brain.² Opioids function by binding to specific opioid receptors in the brain and body that are associated with pain. Opioid receptors occur naturally and are distributed widely throughout the central nervous system and in peripheral sensory and autonomic nerves and modulate the body's perception of pain.³ When opioids attach to these receptors, they block pain signals sent from the brain to the body and release large amounts of dopamine throughout the body.⁴

Opioids include prescription medications prescribed to treat pain as well as illegal drugs with no sanctioned medical use.⁵ Opioids include:⁶

- Fentanyl
- Oxycodone
- Oxymorphone
- Hydrocodone
- Hydromorphone
- Morphine
- Codeine
- Methadone
- Tramadol
- Buprenorphine

In addition to relieving pain, opioids also create feelings of euphoria – or high – as these drugs also activate the regions of the brain involved with pleasure and reward.⁷ Opioids are generally safe when taken for a short time and as prescribed by a doctor. However, because they produce euphoria in addition to pain relief, individuals who use opioids are at an increased risk for potential misuse and opioid use disorders.⁸ Regular use of opioids, even as prescribed by a doctor, may cause an individual to develop a tolerance to the drug, a physical dependence on it, and ultimately, succumb to an opioid use disorder. This condition can have grave consequences, including a heightened risk of overdose and even death.

¹ World Health Organization, *Opioid Overdose*, available at <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/opioid-overdose> (last visited March 5, 2025).

² Medical News Today, *What is pain, and how do you treat it?* (Jan. 11, 2024), available at <https://www.medicalnewstoday.com/articles/145750#:~:text=People%20feel%20pain%20when%20specific,immediate%20contraction%20of%20the%20muscles> (last visited March 5, 2025).

³ Henriksen, G. & Willoch, F., *Imaging of Opioid Receptors in the Central Nervous System* (2008). *Brain* 131 (5): 1171-1196. doi: [10.1093/brain/awm255](https://doi.org/10.1093/brain/awm255)

⁴ *Id.* See also Cumberland County North Carolina, *Opioids FAQ*, available at [https://www.cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/public-health-group/public-health/community-services/c-fort-\(opioid-response\)/about-opioids](https://www.cumberlandcountync.gov/departments/public-health-group/public-health/community-services/c-fort-(opioid-response)/about-opioids) (last visited March 5, 2025).

⁵ Opioids legally prescribed to treat pain include morphine, codeine, methadone, oxycodone, hydrocodone, fentanyl, hydromorphone, and buprenorphine. Heroin is an example of an illicit opioid with no sanctioned medical use. See, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, *SAMHSA Opioid Overdose Toolkit* (2024), available at <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/sma18-4742.pdf> (last visited March 5, 2025).

⁶ John Hopkins Medicine, *Opioids*, available at <https://www.hopkinsmedicine.org/health/treatment-tests-and-therapies/opioids#:~:text=All%20opioids%20work%20similarly%3A%20They,the%20brain%20and%20the%20body> (last visited March 5, 2025).

⁷ National Institute on Drug Abuse, *What classes of prescription drugs are commonly misused?*, (Oct. 2016), available at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/prescription-drugs/opioids/how-do-opioids-affect-brain-body> (last visited March 5, 2025).

⁸ *Id.*

Fentanyl

Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid analgesic that is approximately 50 to 100 times more potent than morphine and 50 times more potent than heroin.⁹ Although fentanyl is a prescription drug, it is also made and used illegally. When prescribed by a physician, fentanyl is typically used to treat patients with severe pain or to manage pain after surgery and is administered via injection, transdermal patch, or in lozenges.¹⁰ Fentanyl may also be used to treat patients with chronic pain who are physically tolerant to other opioids.¹¹ Fentanyl works in the same manner as other opioids to relieve pain and has the similar risk and potential for misuse, overdose and addiction. However, most fentanyl overdoses and related deaths are linked to illicitly manufactured fentanyl.¹²

Fentanyl Overdose

Opioids are the most lethal group of drugs; worldwide they account for two thirds of all deaths relating to drug use, most of which are the result of overdoses¹³ There were 107,543 deaths in the U.S. from drug overdoses in 2023. Fentanyl accounted for 70 percent of these deaths.¹⁴

An overabundance of opioids, such as fentanyl, in the body can lead to a fatal overdose. The opioid receptors that are located in major pain pathways, thus enabling opioids to alleviate the sensation of pain, are also found in the respiratory control centers of the brain.¹⁵ Opioids disrupt the transmission of signals for respiration in the identical manner as they disrupt the transmission of pain signals. This leads to a reduction, and possible cessation, of an individual's respiration. Oxygen starvation will eventually stop vital organs like the heart and brain and can lead to the loss of consciousness, coma, and possible death.¹⁶ Within 3-5 minutes without oxygen, brain damage starts to occur, soon followed by death.¹⁷ However, a person's breathing will commonly slow gradually over time and breathing may not stop until minutes to hours after the drug or drugs were used.¹⁸ An opioid overdose can be identified by a combination of three signs and symptoms referred to as the "opioid overdose triad":¹⁹ pinpoint pupils, unconsciousness; and respiratory depression. Opioid overdose and death have increased significantly in the last three decades. The graphs below demonstrate the total number of U.S. overdose deaths involving prescription opioids and any opioids²⁰ from 1999 to 2022.²¹

⁹ United States Drug Enforcement Administration, *Fentanyl*, available at <https://www.dea.gov/factsheets/fentanyl> (last visited March 5, 2025), and National Institute on Drug Abuse, *What is fentanyl?*, <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/fentanyl> (last visited March 5, 2025).

¹⁰ National Institute on Drug Abuse, *What is fentanyl*, <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/fentanyl> (last visited March 5, 2025).

¹¹ Tolerance occurs when you need a higher and/or more frequent amount of a drug to get the desired effects. National Institute on Drug Abuse, *What classes of prescription drugs are commonly misused?*, (Oct. 2016), available at <http://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/research-reports/prescription-drugs/opioids/how-do-opioids-affect-brain-body> (last visited March 5, 2025).

¹² Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, *Increases in Fentanyl-Related Overdose Deaths-Florida and Ohio, 2013-2015*, <https://www.cdc.gov/mmwr/volumes/65/wr/mm6533a3.htm> (last visited March 5, 2025).

¹³ United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *World Drug Report 2022, Global Overview: Drug Demand and Drug Supply*, (2022), available at https://www.unodc.org/res/wdr2022/MS/WDR22_Booklet_1.pdf (last visited March 5, 2025).

¹⁴ Clean Slate Outpatient Addiction Medicine, *National Fentanyl Prevention and Awareness Day 2024: A Call to Action*, available at <https://www.cleanslatecenters.com/blog/national-fentanyl-awareness-and-prevention-day-2024> (last visited March 5, 2025).

¹⁵ Pattinson, K.T.S., *Opioids and the Control of Respiration*, BJA, Vol. 100, Issue 6, Pages 747-758, available at <https://doi.org/10.1093/bja/aen094> (last visited March 5, 2025).

¹⁶ Harm Reduction Coalition, *Guide to Developing and Managing Overdose Prevention and Take-Home Naloxone Projects*, (Fall 2012), available at <https://harmreduction.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/08/Resource-OverdosePrevention-GuidetoDevelopingandManagingOverdosePreventionandTakeHomeNaloxoneProjects.pdf> (last visited March 5, 2025).

¹⁷ *Id.*

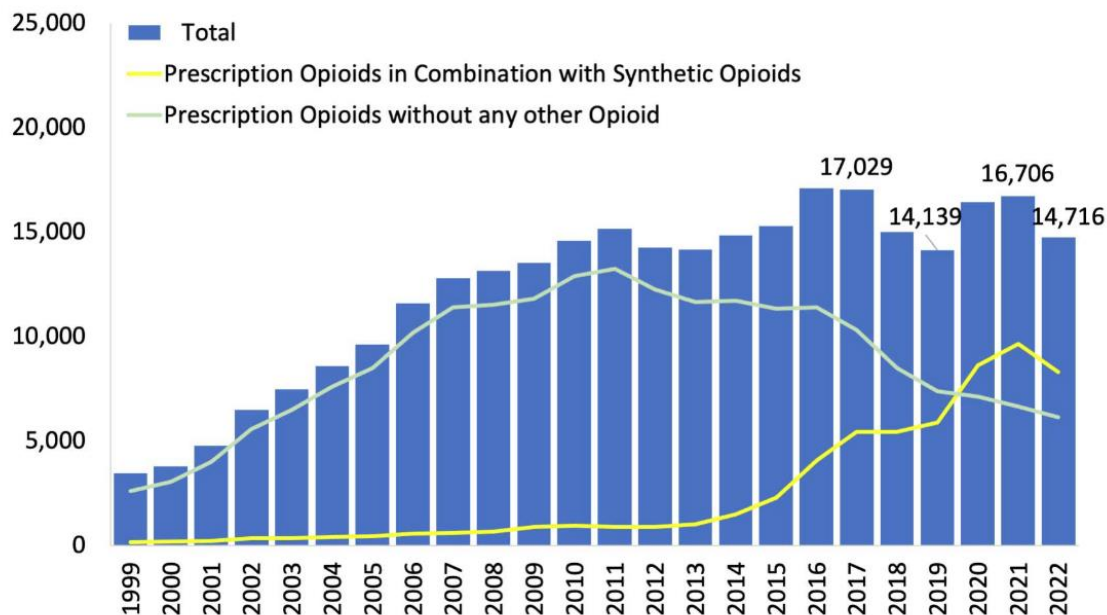
¹⁸ *Id.*

¹⁹ World Health Organization, *Opioid Overdose*, available at <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/opioid-overdose> (last visited March 5, 2025).

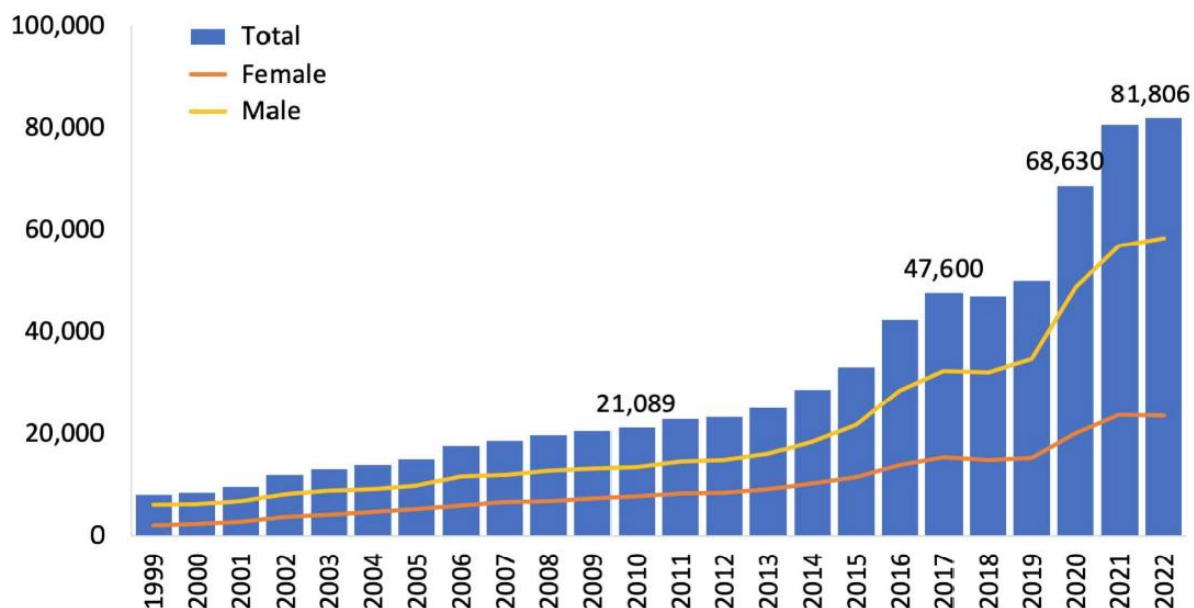
²⁰ Any opioid includes prescription opioids (natural and semi-synthetic opioids and methadone), heroin, and synthetic opioids other than methadone (primarily fentanyl).

²¹ National Institute on Drug Abuse, *Drug Overdose Deaths: Facts and Figures*, available at <https://nida.nih.gov/research-topics/trends-statistics/overdose-death-rates> (last visited March 5, 2025).

U.S. Overdose Deaths Involving Prescription Opioids*, 1999-2022



U.S. Overdose Deaths Involving Any Opioid by Sex, 1999-2022



Since fentanyl is significantly stronger than other opioids, there is an increased risk of overdose and death. Doses as small as two milligrams can be lethal.²² Data collected by Florida medical examiners reflected that in 2023 there

²² USA Facts, *Are Fentanyl Overdose Deaths Rising in the US?*, available at <https://usafacts.org/articles/are-fentanyl-overdose-deaths-rising-in-the-us/> (last visited March 5, 2025).

were 7,235 opioid-related deaths in Florida.²³ The opioids were identified as either the cause of death or merely present at the time of death. Of those deaths, 5,476 were identified as being caused by opioids and 4,962 were caused by fentanyl.²⁴

Opioid overdoses may be treated by opioid antagonist medications, such as naloxone, to block the effects of opioids. Naloxone, is approved by the Federal Drug Administration to quickly reverse the effects of opioids. As an opioid antagonist, it works by attaching to opioid receptors to reverse and block the effect of opioids. In the case of an opioid overdose, an antagonist is capable of restoring normal breathing in someone whose breathing has slowed dramatically or even stopped because of the overdose.²⁵ Naloxone comes in two forms, injectable and prepackaged nasal spray.

National Fentanyl Prevention and Awareness Day

August 21 is National Fentanyl Prevention and Awareness Day.²⁶ The day was established in 2022 as a day of coordinated response from organizations and those impacted by fentanyl overdose to raise public awareness of the dangers of illegally made fentanyl and to prevent overdose deaths. The goals of National Fentanyl Prevention and Awareness Day are to:

- Remember loved ones lost to overdoses involving illegally made fentanyl.
- Acknowledge the devastation of affected families and friends.
- Acknowledge the growing role illegally made fentanyl plays in the overdose crisis.
- Educate and raise public awareness of the dangers of illegally made fentanyl and the importance of overdose prevention.²⁷

Special Observances

Chapter 683, F.S., designates legal holidays and special observances in Florida. These recognitions may apply statewide or be limited to specific regions. For example, “Gasparilla Day” is a legal holiday observed only in Hillsborough County,²⁸ while “Pan-American Day” is recognized throughout the state.²⁹ Some holidays or observances also require specific action for commemoration. For instance, November 7 each year is designated as “Victims of Communism Day,” during which high school students must receive 45 minutes of instruction on the suffering endured by victims of communist regimes.³⁰

There are currently 25 legal holidays³¹ established in law and 37 special observances.³² The state recognizes nine paid holidays that are observed by all state branches and agencies.³³

Revive Awareness Day

²³ Florida Department of Law Enforcement, *Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons by Florida Medical Examiners*, available at <https://www.myfloridalegal.com/sites/default/files/2025-01/2023-drugs-in-deceased-annual-report.pdf> (last visited March 5, 2025).

²⁴ *Id.*

²⁵ National Institute on Drug Abuse, *Naloxone Drug Facts* (Jan. 2022), <https://nida.nih.gov/publications/drugfacts/naloxone> (last visited March 5, 2025).

²⁶ Center for Disease Control, Overdose Prevention, *National Fentanyl Prevention and Awareness Day Toolkit*, available at <https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/php/toolkits/fentanyl-prevention-awareness-day.html#:~:text=August%2021%20marks%20National%20Fentanyl,made%20fentanyl%20and%20save%20lives> (last visited March 5, 2025).

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ All city, county, and state offices and banking institutions in Hillsborough County may remain closed on Gasparilla Day. S. [683.08, F.S.](#)

²⁹ The purpose of Pan-American Day is to establish a day on which the mutually friendly relationship between the state and the Pan-American Republics is recognized and perpetuated. S. [683.05, F.S.](#)

³⁰ S. [683.334, F.S.](#)

³¹ See ss. [683.01](#), [683.08](#), [683.09](#), and [683.19, F.S.](#)

³² See ch. [683, F.S.](#)

³³ S. [110.117\(1\), F.S.](#)

In 2024, the Legislature created “Victoria’s Law,” which designates June 6th of each year as “Revive Awareness Day” and encourages the Department of Health to hold events to raise awareness of the dangers of opioid overdose and the availability and safe use of opioid antagonists.³⁴ Several Florida counties held events for Revive Awareness Day throughout the state in 2024, including Duval,³⁵ Hillsborough,³⁶ Marion,³⁷ Miami-Dade,³⁸ Okaloosa,³⁹ Osceola,⁴⁰ St. Johns,⁴¹ and Seminole⁴² counties.

RECENT LEGISLATION:

YEAR	BILL #	HOUSE SPONSOR(S)	SENATE SPONSOR	OTHER INFORMATION
2024	CS/HB 89	Plakon	Brodeur	Became law on April 8, 2024.

BILL HISTORY				
COMMITTEE REFERENCE	ACTION	DATE	STAFF DIRECTOR/ POLICY CHIEF	ANALYSIS PREPARED BY
Human Services Subcommittee	17 Y, 0 N	3/4/2025	Mitz	Curry
Government Operations Subcommittee	17 Y, 0 N	3/11/2025	Toliver	Villa
Health & Human Services Committee	24 Y, 0 N	3/24/2025	Calamas	Curry

³⁴ Ch. [2024-67, L.O.F.](#) The bill was named for Victoria Segal, who died of an accidental opioid over dose. Following her death, Victoria’s parents, Jackie and David Siegal, established the Victoria’s Voice Foundation which is dedicated to providing drug prevention education and raising awareness of the availability and safe use of opioid antagonists in order to support those affected by substance use. *See* Victoria’s Voice, *Our History*. available at <https://victoriasvoice.foundation/> (last visited March 5, 2025).

³⁵ Florida Health Duval County, *Revive Awareness Day Event*, available at <https://duval.floridahealth.gov/events/2024/06/revive-awareness-day-event-06062024.html> (last visited March 5, 2025).

³⁶ Health News Florida, *On Florida’s inaugural Revive Awareness Day, Free Narcan and Overdose Awareness*, available at <https://health.wusf.usf.edu/health-news-florida/2024-06-07/health-departments-distribute-narcan-on-revive-awareness-day> (last visited March 5, 2025).

³⁷ Florida Health Marion County, *DOH-Marion to Host Revive Awareness Day Event*, available at <https://marion.floridahealth.gov/newsroom/2024/06/Revive-Awareness-Day.html> (last visited March 5, 2025).

³⁸ Florida Health Miami-Dade County, *DOH-Miami-Dade Observes Revive Awareness Day Event*, available at <https://miamidade.floridahealth.gov/newsroom/2024/06/2024-06-06-RAD-Observance-PR-MDade.html#:~:text=Miami%2C%20Fla.,at%20305%2D324%2D2400.&text=1350%20NW%2014th%20St.&text=18255%20Homestead%20Ave.&text=All%20Floridians%20need%20to%20know.Limp%20body> (last visited March 5, 2025).

³⁹ Get the Coast, *Okaloosa County to host Revive Awareness Day event, announce new opioid epidemic efforts* (June 4, 2024), available at <https://www.getthecoast.com/okaloosa-county-to-host-revive-awareness-day-event-announce-new-opioid-epidemic-efforts/> (last visited March 5, 2025).

⁴⁰ Florida Health Osceola County, *Revive Awareness Day*, available at <https://osceola.floridahealth.gov/events/2024/05/revive-awareness-day.html> (last visited March 5, 2025).

⁴¹ Florida Health St. Johns County, *DOH-St. Johns County to Host Revive Awareness Day Event*, available at <https://stjohns.floridahealth.gov/newsroom/2024/06/2024-6-6-revive-awareness-day-pr.html> (last visited March 5, 2025).

⁴² Click Orlando.com, *Seminole County Continues Fight Against Opioid Crisis. Here’s how June 6 marks ‘Revive Awareness Day,’* available at <https://www.clickorlando.com/news/local/2024/06/06/seminole-county-continues-fight-against-opioid-crisis-heres-how/> (last visited March 5, 2025).

