

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Issue 41 • Summer 2024



**Plática con Café: Hablemos del Alcohol / Let's
Talk About Alcohol**



We are excited to share our latest bilingual episode of "Plática con Café: Hablemos del Alcohol / Let's Talk About Alcohol." Join Alma and Erika as they get candid about how alcohol impacts our lives. They discuss why alcohol is often the first substance people try, how easy it is to get, and its effects on different generations. They also explore drinking during the pandemic, the dangers of spiked drinks, and how alcohol affects young brains. They cover challenges young adults face, the importance of the right information, including making safer choices.

We hope that our conversations connect and inspire collective action towards health and safety.

Grab your cafecito and join us on this insightful and engaging journey!

[YouTube playlist](#)

Spanish

[Episodio 4: Hablemos del Alcohol](#)

English

[Episode 4: Let's Talk About Alcohol](#)



Connecting with the Community

Making a Difference





VENTURA COUNTY
BEHAVIORAL HEALTH
A Department of Ventura County Health Care Agency

Substance Use Services – Prevention





By Alma Ixta and Erika Fernandez, Community Services Coordinators

Community outreach involves being in the community and learning from you about what matters, what concerns you, and the ways in which we can best work together to educate and strengthen our communities. We share our prevention messaging, informing families about the risks of marijuana, vaping, opioids, fentanyl, meth, and alcohol to help prevent and reduce alcohol and drug-related issues in our County. We strive to develop relationships with partner organizations and members in the community for collaboration and support regarding substance use prevention.

We offered presentations throughout the county on various prevention topics including opioids and fentanyl, marijuana and vaping, and alcohol and youth.

You can stay in touch with us by watching our [Community Conversations video podcast series](#).

Here are some highlights:

Words from Alma:

This quarter was a busy one! There were several ELAC (English Learner Advisory Committee) parent presentations, Open House events and Wellness Fairs at the different junior high and high schools. With spring came many community outreach events throughout the county. One event that always amazes me for the amount of attendees and resources is the **Annual Feria Campesina**. Hundreds of field working families are in attendance. They are provided with food boxes, clothing, school supplies for their children and many different community agencies ready to provide resources for these families. Many Mixteco families attend this event and MICOP is always there to help provide information in their language. With a growing number of overdoses happening, it is important that we reach this population to inform them of the huge risk in accessing medication outside of

pharmacies. We inform them about the risk of getting “fake pills,” what opioids are and the dangers of fentanyl.

I attended the **Annual Community Resource Fair for the City of Fillmore**. It keeps getting bigger and better every year. Many families shared their stories about overdose, and they thank us for educating the community. I also attended the **Fatherhood Summit, Gold Coast Dia de la Familia Resource Fair** and **Reiter Farms Resource Fair** for field worker employees.

It has been great to be in the community and talking to parents at the different schools and community events. Prevention is the most important thing we can do with our children. They listen to us so never stop talking to your kids about all the things that really matter.

Words from Erika:

This quarter was full of amazing opportunities for outreach, slowing down towards the month of June to start off the summer. I attended several school events and presentations to prepare parents with substance use prevention information and tips for this summer. One of my favorite events was the **Earth Day Wellness Fair** at the **Camino Del Sol Community Garden** in Oxnard. I had the opportunity to talk to several community members and to students from local elementary schools. I shared information about vaping, marijuana, medication safety, opioids, and fentanyl. For the little ones I had stickers and fidgets as giveaways and educated them on medication safety and the effects of second-hand vaping. Substance use prevention is important and being able to share our information to our younger students gives them a start on being able to make healthy choices.

Another highlight was the **Southwinds Youth Center Resource Fair**, by the Mexican American Opportunity Foundation and All of Us journey in collaboration with the Southwinds Youth Center. Community members shared that they take pain medication before and after work, however, they try not to because the medication makes them drowsy and sleepy. I shared information with them about medication safety and opioids, and they realized they were taking opioids. We shared information on driving under the influence of prescribed opioids, Narcan and signs of an overdose.



**Interview with Erika Fernandez,
Community Services Coordinator**



Every month we feature stories of individuals, or local heroes, and agencies that are making a difference in their communities. Today we are talking with our very own Erika Fernandez, Community Services Coordinator, VCBH Substance Use Services - Prevention Services.

How did you become interested in substance use prevention?

Erika: I got interested in the field of prevention while I was working at Casa Pacifica Angels Cottage, the residential program for girls. I worked with girls ages 12-17 with mental health and substance use issues. Working with young girls and learning about their past made me aware of how important prevention is regarding mental and physical health, trauma, substance use, and education. As a parent at the time, I was motivated to find ways that our community could help children that may be at risk. In 2019 I was offered the opportunity to become part of VCBH Substance Use Services - Prevention. I was thrilled to learn that there were people dedicated specifically to prevention efforts.

What is your passion for working in the community?

Erika: My passion is being able to educate community members, especially parents on substance use prevention. Whether it is outreach on substance use or just helping the community learn how to navigate systems, I enjoy being able to reach out to others to help them make educated decisions. I am passionate about working with parents because parenting is one of the hardest things to do. As a mother of three, parenting is more and more challenging. Parents need support and resources to help raise the future generation of our communities. I believe that with prevention, outreach, and unity as a community, we can feel more at ease with our parenting journey.

What are the areas that you hope to make changes in?

Erika: I would like to change the complicated processes that many have to go through to get the help they need. I hope that with outreach efforts and

education we can help to guide people and share the many resources in our community.

Tell us one thing about you that helps us get to know you better?

Erika: One of the reasons I am a true believer that outreach works and changes lives is because my success is a result of an outreach program. My parents immigrated to this country a year before I was born and they always told me that I had to go to college. They had no idea the requirements, planning, and preparation it takes to go to college. All I knew was that after high school I would enroll in college. During my junior year in high school, I was called in to the career center, without knowing why at first, where I was offered to participate in a program that helps students prepare for college and take them on field trips to get exposed to different local universities and colleges. When I met with one of their outreach workers they provided me with all the information I needed to apply for college. I learned how to apply for a university, applied to four universities and got accepted to three. If it wasn't for the outreach specialist that walked me through this process I would not have planned to attend a university right out of high school. That program changed my life, and helped me to get accepted to a university. I received my B.A in Psychology and B.A. in Sociology from CSUCI and became the first in my family to graduate college.

If you could give a closing remark or words of inspiration for the community during this time, what would it be?

Erika: One thing that my dad always told me was to be the best that you can be!

Thank you Erika for sharing your story with us!



Featured Website



What you Need to Know About Teen Cannabis Use and Vaping: Focused on Facts

Learn about the facts related to cannabis and vaping, including the impact on brain development, potency, edibles, safety and driving, pregnancy, teen vaping, vaping nicotine, vaping and chemicals, secondhand vaping, vaping marijuana, and what parents can do.

Learn more:
www.cannabisfactcheck.org



Featured New Resource

Natural High is a drug prevention nonprofit that inspires and empowers youth to find their natural high and develop the skills and courage to live life well. They help young people discover those core activities in their lives that uplift, inspire, and motivate them – to find their ‘Natural High’ rather than use alcohol or drugs.

Learn more:
www.naturalhigh.org



News from Industry Partners

More than 321,000 U.S. children lost a parent to drug overdose from 2011 to 2021

Federal study shows lives lost from overdose crisis are felt across generations, emphasizing need to include children and families in support.

Learn more:
NIDA. 2024, May 8. [More than 321,000 U.S. children lost a parent to drug overdose from 2011 to 2021.](#)

Over 115 million pills containing illicit fentanyl seized by law enforcement in 2023

NIH-supported study highlights increasingly dangerous illicit drug supply, risk of pills not coming from a pharmacy.

Learn more:
NIDA. 2024, May 13. [Over 115 million pills containing illicit fentanyl seized by law enforcement in 2023.](#)

WHO: 3 million die each year from drugs, alcohol

The World Health Organization (WHO) says there are more than 3 million drug- and alcohol-related deaths annually, most of which are among men.

Learn more:

June 25, VOA News. [WHO: 3 million die each year from drugs, alcohol,](#)



Calendar

Community Meetings

- **Circle of Care Monthly Meeting**

One Step A La Vez

1st Wednesday of every month at 1:00 PM

- **Oxnard Police Department Outreach Coordinator Meeting**

1st Wednesday of every month at 10:30 AM

Contact: teresa.telles@oxnardpd.org

- **Santa Paula Social Services Coalition Meeting**

3rd Thursday of every month at 2:00 PM

Contact: SPSocialServiceCoalition@gmail.com

[Santa Paula Social Services Coalition](#)

- **Behavioral Health Advisory Board (BHAB) Prevention Committee Meeting**

Meeting Date/Time: 4th Tuesday every other month at 3:15 PM. These meetings are open to the public.

[BHAB Prevention Committee](#)



Stay Informed



If you are looking for resources in the community, check out our websites. We continually add news, campaigns and more.

Websites

- [Ventura County Limits](#)
- [COAST Ventura County](#)
- [Cannabis FactCheck](#)

Follow us on Social Media

- www.facebook.com/venturacountylimits
- twitter.com/vclimits

Check out our Newsletters

- [Community Connections Newsletter](#)



About Us

Supporting Health – Preventing Harm

Prevention means working upstream to reduce alcohol and drug-related problems in our community. We are involved in outreach in our communities, educating and increasing awareness about the risks and realities of alcohol and drug misuse and abuse.



Contact Us



Interested in presentations or publications to share with your communities? Contact Us!

Community Services Coordinators:

Erika Fernandez Erika.Fernandez@ventura.org

Alma Ixta Alma.Ixta@ventura.org

STAY CONNECTED



Ventura County Behavioral Health | 1911 Williams Drive | Oxnard, CA 93036 US

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