

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS

Issue 43 • Winter 2025



Plática con Café Podcast Series

Nueva Serie de Podcast



Acompáñame

Plática con Café

Our community is facing ever-shifting drug trends that may harm those we care about. We sit down to review commonly asked questions and how best we can respond as a community. Alma and Erika discuss the risks and harms of fentanyl, vaping & cannabis. Join the conversations and stay informed!

www.positivepaths.org/platica



Words from Alma & Erika

Connecting with the Community





By Alma Ixta & Erika Fernandez, Intensive 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.

Highlights from Alma:

During the past months, I attended several events in the community throughout the county, including Moorpark, Camarillo, Fillmore, Ventura, Oxnard and Thousand Oaks. Everywhere I went people had a story to share with me about a loved one with substance use issues or about a loss in their family or close friends due to an overdose. Now, more than ever, I try to express the importance that prevention has in our county.

I presented at ELAC parent meetings at **DeAnza Middle School** and **Pacific High School**. Both parent presentations brought me much satisfaction because I can see how much parents learn from these presentations and how our resources and information will make a difference with these families. Pacific High School had 51 people in attendance, the most I ever had in an ELAC meeting. I feel a sense of accomplishment when I can bring our information to parents that only speak Spanish because many times, they are not aware of everything their kids are exposed to in their environments. In these times we all must be very vigilant with our children, teenagers and adult children suffering with mental health or substance use issues. Being a parent never ends, no matter the age of our children.

I hope everyone has had a great start to 2025 and I look forward to seeing you all in the community. My goal for 2025 is to talk to as many people as I can about the importance that prevention has in our community and help prevent our young people from falling into the addiction of substance use.

Highlights from Erika:

This quarter I was able to share all our prevention information with many parents in the community. I had several parent presentations scheduled at different schools in Ventura County that allowed me to have meaningful conversations with our parents about the dangers of alcohol and drugs. It makes me so happy to see how many parents take the time to attend my presentations and want to stay up to date on what can affect their kids in the community and how they can prevent any use of drugs or alcohol with their kids.

One event that had a great outcome this past quarter was the **La Colonia Community 5K Walk in Oxnard**. It was a great community

event. I spoke to several community members about the dangers of fentanyl and how to keep their medication safe at home. Most of the people at this event were Spanish speaking so it was great to be able to bring this information to them, because many of them had not heard of fentanyl.

Another amazing opportunity I had on the other side of the county was the **Conejo Parent Workshop in Thousand Oaks**. I was invited to set up a table with resources and to speak on their Spanish panel to parents. The event had a great outcome, considering it was a Dodgers world series game night. The panel consisted of a medical expert, law enforcement, a school administrator, and me. I was happy to see parents still made it to the event to hear the great information we had to provide.

I look forward to more opportunities to meet with the community in the new year!



Prevention Team: Comings & Goings

Committed to Prevention

Welcome New Prevention Staff

A shout out to the newest members of our Prevention Services Team, Kathleen Roberts and Ruben Palazuelos, both Alcohol and Drug Treatment Specialists who transferred from the VCBH DUI programs and have adolescent treatment services backgrounds. They will be working along with John Rivera, Prevention Clinic Administrator, to expand our Prevention & Early Intervention Programs utilizing BRRIM in the schools. BRRIM, the Brief Risk Reduction Interview and Intervention Model, is an early intervention model for youth starting to struggle with behavioral issues that include alcohol, marijuana, tobacco and other drugs, violence, and other barriers to learning.

“Our goal is to intervene into problems before they become diagnosable disorders,” says John Rivera, “but of course, a percentage of those we serve will be candidates for assessment and treatment too.”

The team is excited about working in non-clinical settings and reaching out to people who are substance involved. The change for counselors from DUI to Early Intervention is already well underway. “First we are transitioning staff from DUI counselors to use their skills for a broader group of residents—to reach people BEFORE they have problems with the law like a DUI, using screening tools along with their strong engagement skills, to intervene early and prevent progression of substance problems before they become a

diagnosis.”

Learn more about BRRIM and Student Assistance Programs (SAPs):
www.positivepaths.org/youth/student-assistance-programs

Celebrating Retirement: Sheila Murphy

A well-deserved Congratulations to Sheila Murphy who retired in January after over 18 years of service in the county! Sheila served as the VCBH COAST Administrator, and previously as the Health Care Agency’s Public Information Officer. We will miss her as part of our Prevention Services Team!



Featured Prevention Partner Saving Lives Camarillo

Educating the Community



Saving Lives Camarillo Coalition Wraps Up a Successful 2024

The Saving Lives Coalition (SLC) concludes 2024, a year marked by innovation, collaboration, and impactful programs addressing the opioid crisis and promoting drug safety throughout Camarillo.

Highlights include:

- Offered parenting webinars on substance misuse, bullying, and suicide prevention.
- Visited schools across Camarillo, engaging students with lessons on strategies for resisting substance use.
- Distributed Overdose prevention kits and fentanyl test strips, expanding access to critical resources that combat opioid misuse and overdose.
- The “Better in the Safe than Sorry” campaign aired in local theaters and reached thousands with its household safety message.
- Sponsored the Opioid Awareness Memorial Walk to honor victims of opioid-related tragedies.
- Developed a PSA about DETERRA, a medication disposal system.
- Presented “I CARE Campaign Awards” to recognize outstanding partners whose efforts significantly advanced the coalition’s mission.

Looking Forward to 2025

Community Coordinator Szonja Vidosa emphasized the coalition’s ongoing focus on household safety, *“We believe drug safety starts at home. Lock up medications and dispose of them responsibly. Visit our office or outreach events to pick up your free disposal kit.”*

Learn more:

Saving Lives Camarillo

www.savinglivescamarillo.net



Featured Website: Positive Paths

Check out our new Prevention Website



POSITIVE PATHS

Supporting Health • Preventing Harm

The best time to prevent substance use issues is before they begin. The second-best time is today. This website contains information and resources that can be used for outreach and education in schools, in the community, and for yourself and your loved ones.

Learn more about the many pathways toward healthier living.

Teens & Young Adults

Positive Paths

Supporting Health • Preventing Harm

The best time to prevent substance use issues is before they begin. The second-best time is today. This website contains information and resources that can be used for outreach and education in schools, in the community, and for yourself and your loved ones.

Learn more:

Positive Paths

www.positivepaths.org/



Staying in the Know: Latest Research from Industry Partners

Brain structure differences are associated with early use of substances among adolescents.

Many differences appeared to exist prior to any substance use, pointing to the role brain structure may play in substance use risk, NIH-supported study suggests.

Read the article

[NIDA](#). 12/30/24.

Missing rebound: Youth drug use defies expectations, continues historic decline.

Declines in drug use in 2024 were evident across alcohol, marijuana and nicotine vaping, which are the three most common forms of substance use by adolescents. The continued declines in adolescent drug use since the pandemic raise important policy and research questions. They suggest that a delay in drug use initiation during adolescence could potentially lower substance use trajectories over a lifetime.

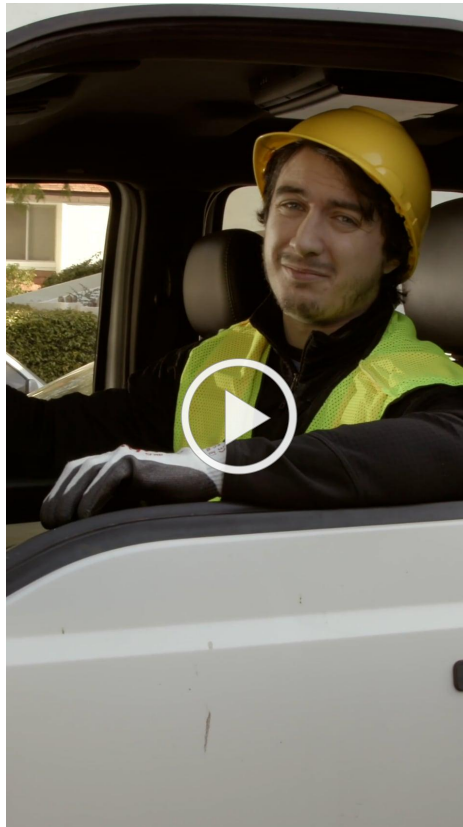
Read the article:

[Monitoring the Future](#), 12/17/24.



Featured Campaign Empty Seat - Just Not Worth it

When you add it up, illegal drugs are just not worth it.



I just want to do what I want to do. We're not going to tell you how you should live your life. We'd like to think that you, like any adult, have thought about the effect that consuming illegal drugs might have on your life and your health. And how it might affect the people you love and who love you.



Featured Resource: Song for Charlie's The New Drug Talk

"Fentanyl has changed the drug landscape, and we have to change how we talk to kids about it. This site provides education, free tools, and expert advice to help families across the US connect and stay safe. Song for Charlie is a national family-run nonprofit charity dedicated to raising awareness about 'fentapills' — fake pills made of fentanyl."

Learn more:
The New Drug Talk National
www.thenewdrugtalk.org/national



Calendar

Community Meetings

- **Circle of Care Monthly Meeting**
One Step A La Vez
1st Wednesday of every month at 1:00 PM
- **Outreach Coordinator Meeting, OUHSD**
1st Wednesday of every month at 10:30 AM
Contact: teresa.telles@oxnardunion.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**
4th Tuesday every other month at 3:15 PM.
BHAB Prevention Committee



Stay Informed

Websites

- [Positive Paths](#)
- [COAST Ventura County](#)
- [Ventura County Behavioral Health](#)

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- x.com/PositivePathsVC

Check out our Newsletters

- www.positivepaths.org/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. Read about our Prevention Services initiatives and our work in Ventura County.



Contact Us



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

Intensive Services Coordinators:

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STAY CONNECTED



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