



HB 3908 (88th Texas Legislature, Regular Session, 2023), known as Tucker’s Law, adds to the duties of a school health advisory council (SHAC) the requirement to recommend to the local board of trustees the appropriate grade levels and curriculum for instruction in the dangers of opioids, including addiction to and abuse of synthetic opioids such as fentanyl.

HB 3908 also adds new TEC, §38.040, which requires each school district and open-enrollment charter school to annually provide to students in grades 6–12 research-based instruction on fentanyl abuse prevention and drug poisoning awareness. The required instruction in fentanyl prevention and drug poisoning awareness must include the following:

- Suicide prevention
- Prevention of the abuse of and addiction to fentanyl
- Awareness of local school and community resources and any processes involved in accessing those resources
- Health education that includes information about substance use and abuse, including youth substance use and abuse

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At the SHAC meeting on 3/20/2024, an online curriculum through Everfi was presented to the committee to meet the above requirements for the 2023-24 school year. SHAC members were given the opportunity to enroll in the two classes, Prescription Drug Safety: Know the truth and Understanding Mental Wellness to preview the curriculum themselves. A vote was taken and the SHAC committee unanimously approved the curriculum 13-0.

### **Prescription Drug Safety: Know the truth**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION** The course will educate students about the potential dangers of misusing prescription drugs and the impact misuse can have on their physical and mental health, their relationships and communities, and their future. Through personal stories and interactive scenarios, students will learn about what constitutes appropriate use, proper storage and disposal, misuse and addiction (or substance use disorder), and treatment and recovery. By developing skills and strategies to prevent prescription drug misuse, students will become confident, empowered, and safe users of prescription drugs. They will also learn how to support others in need, including specific steps and instructions for responding to an overdose situation. Last but not least, the final module of the course is designed to raise awareness about the fentanyl crisis related to the rise of counterfeit pills in the United States, empowering students to stay safe and help others do the same.

### **Understanding Mental Wellness**

**COURSE DESCRIPTION** Physical health has been a part of schools’ curricula for over 150 years which has led to a positive framing of physical health as it relates to a person’s life. Educational institutions are just beginning to address mental health in the same way. Mental wellness is an important part of overall health, but mental health is often misunderstood or mistaken for mental illness. This course fills a need as schools seek to incorporate more ways to address the mental health needs of students. The Understanding Mental Wellness course blends evidence-informed content with engaging digital activities. By defining what mental wellness is and modeling positive behaviors this online program teaches students the importance of paying attention to their mental health. This course explores the difference between mental wellness and mental illness, and provides strategies for coping during stress or mental health challenges. The course shows the impact of thought patterns, trauma, stigma, and times of uncertainty. Suicide prevention and when to seek help for yourself or others is also covered. Six lessons scaffold students’ knowledge to build a comprehensive understanding of what mental wellness is and how to maintain or achieve it. Interactive scenarios and digital stories allow students to face stressful situations and manage their mental health effectively while learning how to identify warning signs and how to get help for themselves and for others. The first five lessons contain a pre- and post-assessment to measure knowledge gain throughout. The

sixth lesson is application-based. Additionally, students complete a survey at the start and end of the course, to evaluate attitudinal and behavioral change.

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Samantha Gerngross is attending a program “Protecting Our Youth: School-Based Responses to the Fentanyl Crisis” on Thursday, April 18, 2024 at the Amon Carter Center in Fort Worth. The program will highlight the devastation of fentanyl on our youth and will feature strategies that Texas schools can implement to prevent and respond to overdose assisting districts to meet the requirements of HB 3908.