



A Forensic Autopsy of a Fentanyl Poisoning Homicide Trial – What worked, What did not work, What's next

Tuesday, January 14th, 2025

0800-1700

Location: WSIN

1825 Bell Street, Suite 205

Sacramento, CA 95825

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Instructor: Detective Patrick Craven is employed by the Placer County Sheriff's Office. Currently, he serves as the lead detective for the Placer Opioid Response Team (PORT), a specialized unit dedicated to addressing opioid-related issues. Before his role in PORT, Detective Craven spent four years as an undercover narcotics officer for the Placer County Special Investigation Unit (PSIU). In 2020, he began investigating fentanyl poisonings and has since been the lead detective on twenty-five cases involving fentanyl deaths. Detective Craven was the lead detective on California's first fentanyl poisoning homicide conviction as well as the state's second fentanyl poisoning homicide conviction by trial. In total, Detective Craven has successfully obtained three fentanyl poisoning homicide convictions and one manslaughter conviction. Detective Craven possesses unparalleled expertise in investigating fentanyl poisoning homicides and is leading the way in this specialized field.

Instructor: Senior Deputy District Attorney Devan Portillo has been a prosecutor for just over a decade prosecuting everything from DUIs to homicides. For the past four years Devan has been the lead prosecutor for Unit 1, the special prosecutions unit of the Placer County District Attorney's Office that handles all human trafficking, cartel level major narcotics crimes, and fentanyl poisoning homicides. Unit 1 is well known within the state for its pathfinding work on fentanyl homicides including securing the first two fentanyl poisoning homicide pleas in California. SDDA Portillo is also the second prosecutor in the state to obtain a murder conviction by jury trial for fentanyl poisoning. SDDA Portillo has conducted multiple complex jury trials related to major narcotics and homicide and works in concert with both state and federal narcotics taskforces to actively identify, disrupt, and dismantle drug trafficking organizations. SDDA Portillo also teaches regularly for CNOA regarding confidential informants and narcotics prosecutions.

Description: This course will discuss in detail the facts and pitfalls surrounding the second successful fentanyl poisoning murder prosecution in California history. From the inception of the investigation, to the reasons why the first trial ended in a mistrial, and ultimately the good the bad and the ugly surrounding the second trial that concluded in 12 jurors agreeing that a fentanyl dealer who chooses profit over life, is guilty of murder. This course will be separated into three distinct segments. First, Detective Craven will discuss the multiple young lives lost prior to the victim in question and the investigative path that led to the drug dealer. Detective Craven will then discuss the challenges in establishing implied malice in the context of a fentanyl poisoning along with how he convinced prosecutors to file murder charges. Second, SDDA Portillo will discuss the process of building the case for trial including the unique legal battles waged throughout. SDDA Portillo will discuss the initial strategy going into the first trial as well as the pivot made for the second trial including new expert witnesses. Along the way SDDA Portillo will explain the reason for the first mistrial, the defense tactics – some of which resonated with both juries, and the un-anticipated problems with the evidence that were exposed during trial. Lastly, both instructors will discuss the lessons learned and how they are being applied to current and future prosecutions including thoughts behind how far up the drug supply chain you can go and still charge murder.

Fee: \$40.00 for current CNOA members and \$60.00 for non-members. The class fee will be accepted during sign-in on the day of the class. Checks are to be made out to "CNOA Region II." If pre-paying for the class by check, please mail to WSIN, 1825 Bell St, Suite 205, Sacramento, CA, 95825, Attn: CNOA. If paying with cash, please have the exact amount.

Please register at www.cnoa.org/events/calendar. Payment via credit card is available through payment link sent in confirmation email after you register for the course.

Check-in begins at 0730 hours with class starting by 0800. If you have questions regarding the training, contact Erin Horn at ehorn@wsin.riss.net or George Negrete at gnegrete@sjgov.org. CNOA membership applications will be available for those wishing to join.

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