

# OVERDOSE RESPONSE STRATEGY

PUBLIC HEALTH | PUBLIC SAFETY | PARTNERSHIP



## Trends, Analysis & Threats Call Summary May 7, 2025

### ORS Program Overview

Christopher Jakim | HIDTA Deputy National Coordinator, Overdose Response Strategy

The [Overdose Response Strategy](#) (ORS) Program is a unique collaboration between public health and public safety to reduce overdose deaths. The work of the ORS program is carried out by the 61 ORS teams covering all 50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. These teams are comprised of a Drug Intelligence Officer (DIO) and a Public Health Analyst (PHA).

The program's four key goals are:

- Sharing data
- Supporting evidence-based response efforts
- Promoting promising strategies at the intersection of public health and public safety
- Supporting implementation of evidence-informed prevention strategies

### National Overdose Trends

Steve Barnes, MPH | Technical Advisor, Overdose Response Strategy

While the national trends are encouraging, variations across states and jurisdictions highlight the ongoing need for targeted efforts and localized analysis. Nationwide, we're currently seeing:

- 26% reduction in overdose deaths (for the 12-month period ending in Nov 2024, [CDC NVSS](#)).
- 12% decline in non-fatal overdoses treated in emergency departments (Feb 2024 – Feb 2025, [CDC DOSE](#)).
  - 4% increase from January to February 2025.
- 14% reduction in non-fatal overdoses reported through EMS/911 calls (Apr 2024 – Apr 2025, [NEMESIS](#)).

### Inside the Drug Landscape: What Experts Are Seeing

#### The DEA Special Testing Laboratory

Presenter: Agnes Winokur, PhD | Director, Special Testing and Research Lab

Dr. Winokur provided critical context on the evolving drug supply through routine and specialized analysis by DEA laboratories. Understanding their data helps public health and law enforcement anticipate shifts in the drug market and prepare targeted intervention:

- Of the seized drug exhibits DEA analyzed in 2024, methamphetamine (33%), fentanyl (24%), and cocaine (20%) were the leading substances.
- In 2024, the average fentanyl powder purity for the nation was 11.3% with California having the highest purity at 21.6%, followed by Florida (14.9%) and Pennsylvania (14.7%).
- The average purity of tablets was 1.72% in 2024, down from 2.2% in 2023.
- Carfentanil and other synthetic opioids are increasingly prevalent, adding complexity to prevention and response.

## Center for Forensic Science Research and Education (CFSRE)

**Presenter: Josua DeBord, PhD | Senior Scientist**

Dr. DeBord presented on the complexities of the current drug supply, discussing how variations in drug composition, geographic differences, and the timing of sample collection impact analysis and highlight the need for regionally adaptive responses. From the beginning of 2024 through April 2025, CFSRE analyzed over 4,000 samples and found:

- About half of the tested substances contained fentanyl as the primary drug.
- Prominent adulterants included xylazine, lidocaine, and caffeine, with variations across substances and regions, complicating public health and safety responses.

## Millennium Health

**Presenter: Eric Dawson, PharmD | Vice President, Clinical Affairs**

Dr. Dawson presented data from urine drug testing (UDT) among adults that have a substance use disorder (SUD) diagnosis or those under the care of an SUD provider. This targeted population provides valuable insights into substance use patterns and emerging risks, helping to guide clinical and public health interventions.

- Overall, fentanyl urine drug test positivity rates are down 12% since 2022.
- Co-detection of methamphetamine and cocaine in those using fentanyl has increased annually since 2023.
- Heroin co-use grew by almost 18% from 2023 to 2024 in the population using fentanyl
- Fentanyl concentrations in UDT on the West Coast are sharply increasing as of February 2025.

## Conclusion and Takeaways

- National reductions in overdoses indicate progress, yet trends like increasing fentanyl concentrations of urine drug tests in the west, increasing co-use of methamphetamine, and adulterants that show profound geospatial differences underscore ongoing threats.
- Geographically tailored strategies are crucial given the variability in substance compositions and usage patterns.
- A continued focus on collaborative, data-driven approaches is essential to sustain and expand progress. Engaging public health, public safety, and partners from all fields at the local level remains crucial for developing responsive and effective strategies.