

# The Illicit Fentanyl Crisis and Drug Poisonings

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 Retired Supervisory Special Agent  
 U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration

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| <b>2023: 107,543</b> | 295/day<br>12/hour |
| <b>2024: 79,384</b>  | 217/day<br>9/hour  |
| <b>2025: ~70,231</b> | 192/day<br>8/hour  |

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Source: World Health Organization

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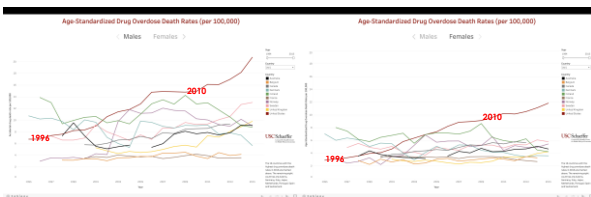
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USA drug poisoning death rate = **3.5%** times higher on average when compared to 17 other high-income countries.  
**27x** higher than Italy & Japan.

Source: USC - Population & Development Review - 2019

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2016 - East Liverpool, OH

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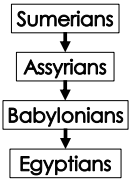
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• **Natural (Opium)**

- Codeine
- Thebaine
- Morphine



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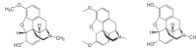
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- **Natural**

Codeine  
Thebaine  
Morphine



- **Semi-synthetic**

Codeine to Hydrocodone (*Vicodin, Lorcet*)  
Thebaine to Oxycodone (*OxyContin, Percocet*)  
Morphine to Heroin

- **Synthetic**

Methadone  
Demerol  
Fentanyl

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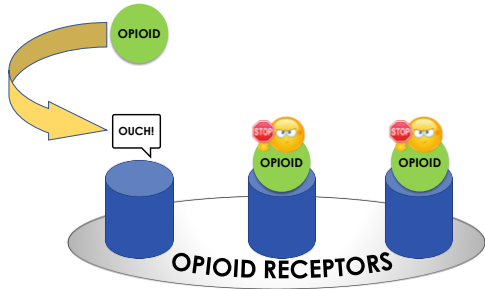
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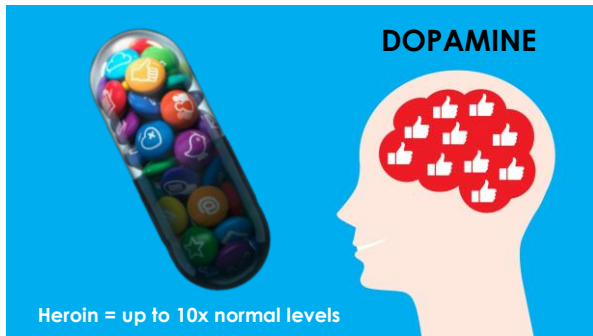
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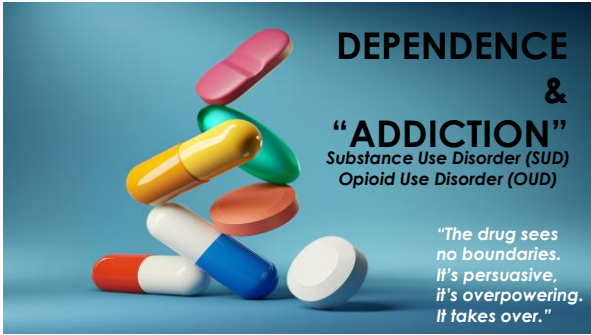
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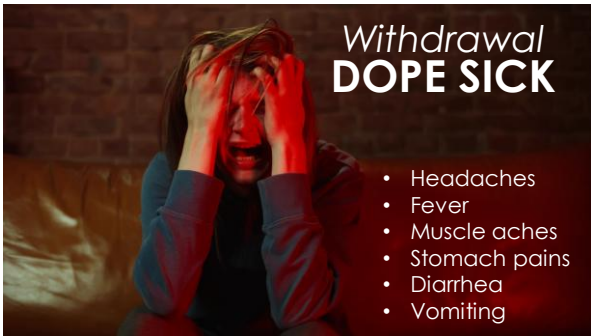
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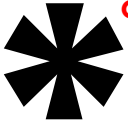
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**Fentanyl doesn't necessarily give you the chance for "addiction" or recovery.**

***It can kill you the first time you use it... or unknowingly use it.***

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Opium  
Morphine  
Heroin

OxyContin  
-pills, pills, pills

Heroin

Heroin-Fentanyl  
Fentanyl-Heroin

Fentanyl-pills, pills, pills  
Fentanyl-methamphetamine  
Fentanyl-cocaine

**Illicit Fentanyl Crisis**

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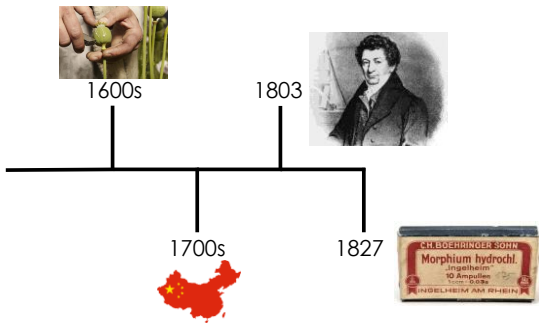
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1<sup>st</sup> Opium War  
1839-1842



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1853

1861-1865



"Soldier's  
disease"

"Army's  
disease"

1856-1860  
2<sup>nd</sup> Opium War



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1 in 200  
Americans

1895



**"Though it could cure little, it could relieve anything."**

- David T. Courtwright, Dark Paradise: A History of Opiate Addiction in America.

Source: Smithsonian Magazine: Inside the Story of America's 19<sup>th</sup>-Century Opiate Addiction (Jan 2018)

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1898

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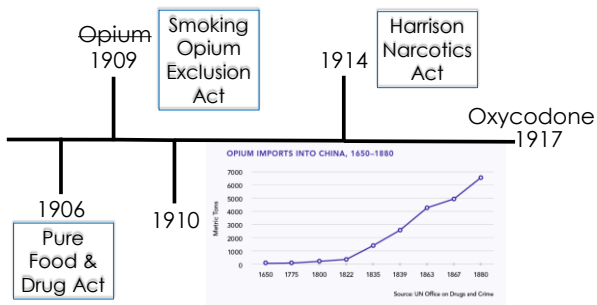
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Penicillin

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**2022 Annual Revenue**

- 1. Pfizer  
100.33 billion
- 2. Johnson & Johnson  
94.94 billion
- 3. AbbVie  
58.05 billion
- 4. Bristol-Myers Squibb  
46.15 billion
- 5. Abbott  
43.65 billion
- 6. Merck & Co.  
42.84 billion
- 7. Eli Lilly and Company  
28.54 billion
- 8. Stryker  
18.44 billion
- 9. Regeneron Pharmaceuticals  
12.17 billion
- 10. Biogen  
10.173 billion

**Penicillin**  
...major growth push!

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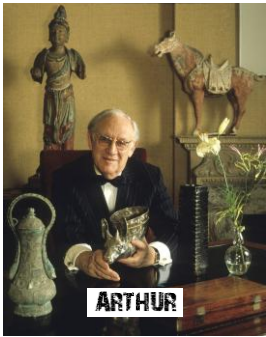
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William Douglas McAdams Agency

**MORTIMER RAYMOND**  
"invented the wheel when it came to modern medical advertising"

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### Faster Onset, Shorter Duration

Controlled Substances Act (CSA)  
Schedule II



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Post Civil War / early 1900s → 1996



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**New England Journal of Medicine**

January 10, 1980

**“Addiction Rare in Patients Treated with Narcotics”**

Dr. Hershel Jick & Jane Porter

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**Only 4 out of 12,000 patients = addicted**

“We conclude that despite widespread use of narcotic drugs in hospitals, the development of addiction is rare in medical patients with no history of addiction.”

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- Not a controlled study
- Not peer reviewed
- Based on hospitalization and not what happened when patients left the hospital



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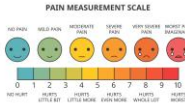
Vital Signs

1. Temperature
2. Breathing rate
3. Blood pressure
4. Pulse (heart) rate

American Pain Society 1996



5. Pain "Pain: the 5th Vital Sign."



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OxyContin

Oxy = Oxycodone  
Contin = Continuous (12 hours)

Purdue 1996



"Addiction Rare in Patients Treated with Narcotics"

"...less than 1% of people become addicted."

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OxyContin = "Heroin in a pill"

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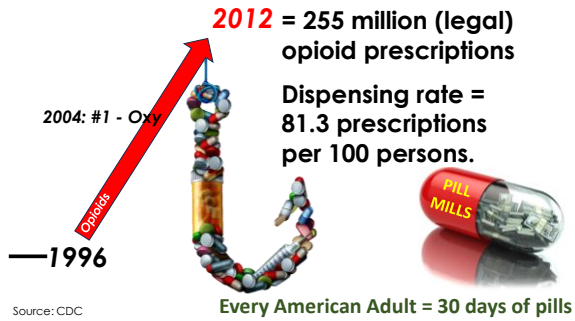
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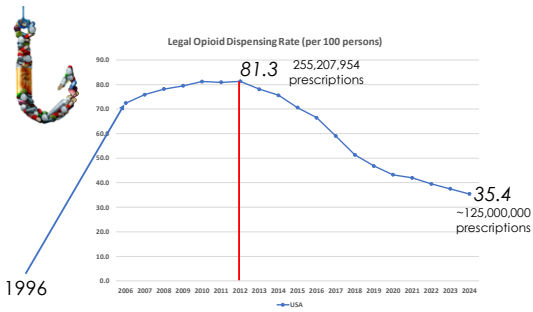
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**Highest:**

- Arkansas – 68.8
- Alabama – 68.5
- Mississippi – 61.4
- Louisiana – 59.2
- Tennessee – 56.1

**2024 National Average: 35.4**

**Lowest:**

- Hawaii – 21
- California – 22.4
- New Jersey – 23.7
- New York – 24.1
- Minnesota – 25



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2013 - US Department of Health and Human Services

# Declared the misuse of prescription opioids an epidemic.

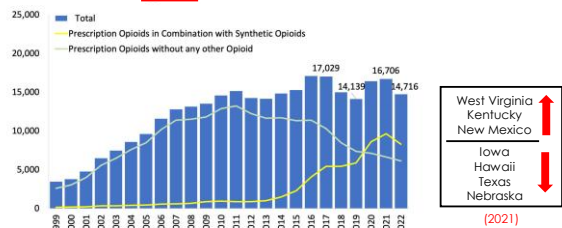
**WE HAVE TO CHANGE WHAT WE ARE DOING!**

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**Figure 4. U.S. Overdose Deaths Involving Prescription Opioids\*, 1999-2022**

Source: CDC/NIDA

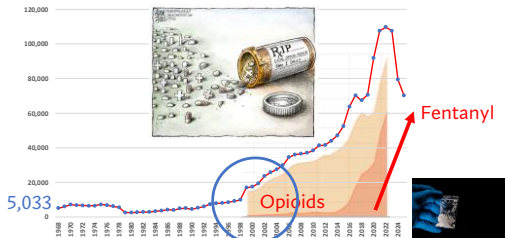


\*Among deaths with drug overdose as the underlying cause, the prescription opioid subcategory was determined by the following ICD-10 multiple cause-of-death codes: natural and semi-synthetic opioids (T462.2) or methadone (T462.3). Source: Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. Multiple Cause of Death 1999-2022 on CDC WONDER Online Database, released 4/2024.

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Drug Overdoses/Poisonings (1968 - 2025)



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Source: The New Yorker: Who is Responsible for the Pain-Pill Epidemic? (November 2013)

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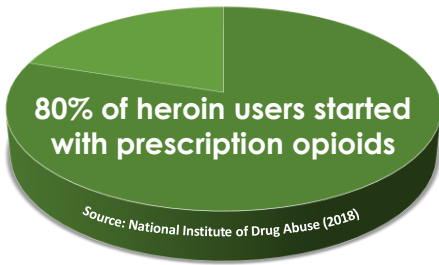
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**Heroin Use Quadrupled!**

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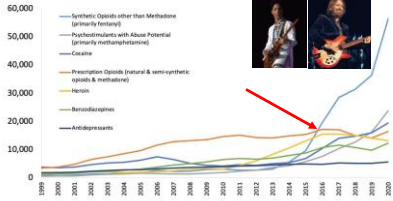
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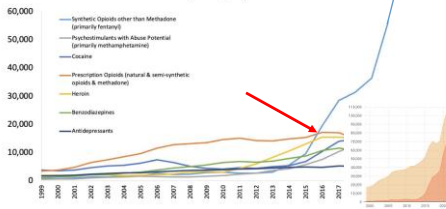
**Figure 2. National Drug-Involved Overdose Deaths\*, Number Among All Ages, 1999-2020**



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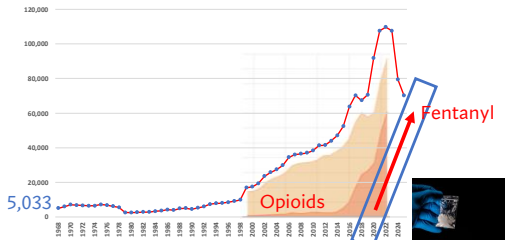
**Figure 2. National Drug-Involved Overdose Deaths\*, Number Among All Ages, 1999-2020**



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**Drug Overdoses/Poisonings (1968 - 2025)**



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# Opioid Crisis

On Thursday October 26, 2017, President Trump officially declared the opioid crisis a

**“public health emergency.”**

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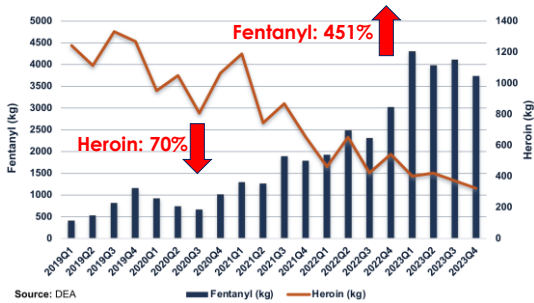
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HEROIN AND FENTANYL DOMESTIC DRUG SEIZURES



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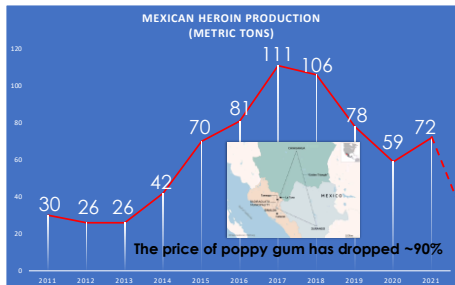
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Source: The Office of National Drug Control Policy, Global Initiative Against Transnational Organized Crime, & DEA 2024 National Drug Threat Assessment

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**HEROIN**  
**FENTANYL AND FENTANYL**  
**RELATED COMPOUNDS**  
**WERE CO-REPORTED WITH**  
**72.2%**  
**OF ALL HEROIN**  
**SUBMISSIONS IN 2023.**

Source: DEA NFLIS-Drug, March 14, 2024.

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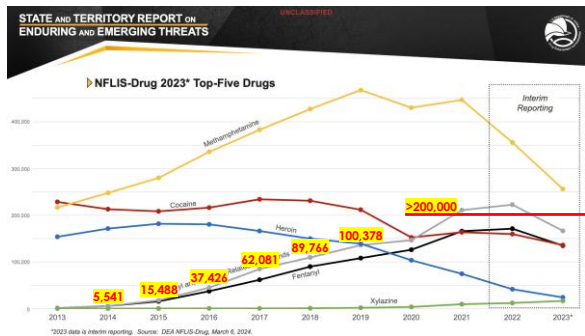
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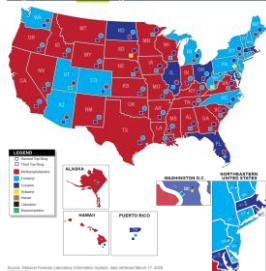
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| NFLIS-Drug 2023*<br>Top Five Drug Submissions |   |
|---|---|
| Rank  | Drug                                    |
| 1   | Methamphetamine                         |
| 2   | Fentanyl and Fentanyl Related Compounds |
| 3   | Cocaine                                 |
| 4   | Heroin                                  |
| 5   | Xylazine                                |

\*2023 data is interim reporting.

Appendix A: Top Three Drug Submissions Reported to NFLIS by State



Source: DEA NFLIS-Drug (March 2025)

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1 gram = 1,000 milligrams  
2 milligrams = deadly dose  
**1 gram packet = 500 deadly doses**

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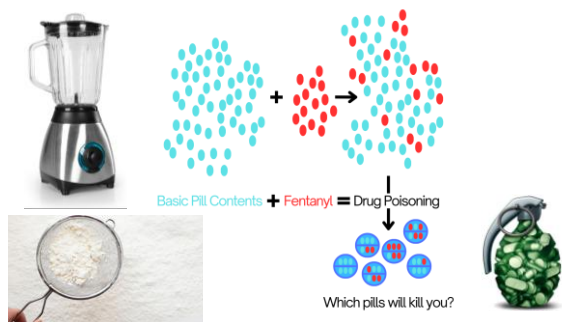
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### WHY?

- **Powerful.** A tiny amount can skyrocket the drug's effects, creating a much stronger high. And for users chasing that intense experience, that's a big draw.
- **Cheap.** Fentanyl is far less expensive to produce than many other drugs. Traffickers can boost the potency of their product at a lower cost, seriously increasing their profits.
- **Addictive.** The ultimate goal for any drug dealer is repeat business. Fentanyl creates a powerful dependency, trapping users in a cycle that lines the dealer's pockets.

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**Xylazine aka "Tranq," "Zombie Drug"**

- Non-opioid tranquilizer, sedative, and pain reliver
- FDA approved veterinary use only (large animals)
- Kilogram = \$6-20
- Open wounds ("flesh-eating")
- No antidote  
*(It is not an opioid so Naloxone will not work)*
- 2022 – in approximately 23% powder & 7% pills (seized)
- 2023 – All 50 states



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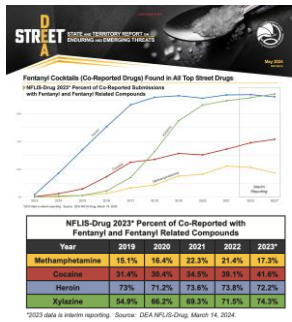
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**Latest Data:**

**COCAINE**  
FENTANYL AND FENTANYL-RELATED COMPOUNDS WERE CO-REPORTED WITH **41.6%** OF ALL COCAINE SUBMISSIONS IN 2023.

Source: DEA NFLS-Drug, March 14, 2024.

Cocaine & Fentanyl  
**25%**  
(Reported May 2025)

**METHAMPHETAMINE**  
FENTANYL AND FENTANYL-RELATED COMPOUNDS WERE CO-REPORTED WITH **17.3%** OF ALL METHAMPHETAMINE SUBMISSIONS IN 2023.

Source: DEA NFLS-Drug, March 14, 2024.

Methamphetamine & Fentanyl  
**12.5%**  
(Reported May 2025)

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**Drug use isn't more common, it's more dangerous.**



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**Medications for Opioid Use Disorder (MOUD):**  
**Medicated Assisted Treatment (MAT)**



- Methadone
- Buprenorphine
  - Subutex
  - Suboxone 
  - Zubsolv
- Bunavail
- Produphine
- Sublocade
- Naltrexone (Vivitrol)

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**“less than 10% of people who need treatment are receiving it.”**

Source: World Health Organization: Opioid Overdose 29 AUG 23

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**“Addiction hides in the shadows because of the shame that comes from doing something you can’t control and know deep down it isn’t healthy.”**

*- Dr. Jonathan Avery*



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|                                    |   |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Education, Prevention, & Awareness | <b>Kids / Drug Use is Preventable</b><br>Parents = Engage in Open Conversations<br><b>DRUG AWARENESS/EDUCATION!!!</b> |
| Enforcement & Prosecution          | <b>Drug Poisoning = Murder</b><br><b>DRUG POISONING = MURDER</b>  |
| Treatment & Recovery               | <b>New Strategies / Support &amp; Expand Access (\$\$\$)</b>  |
| Medical & Scientific Approaches    | <b>New Strategies</b>   |
| Government Funding                 | <b>Funding (\$\$\$) &amp; Legislation</b>   |
| Media & Story Telling              | <b>Raise Public Awareness</b>   |
| Trauma & Mental Health Support     | <b>Address Underlying Issues</b>  |
| Reduce Demand & Reduce Stigma      | <b>Public Campaign &amp; Health Alternatives</b><br><b>DRUG AWARENESS/EDUCATION!!!</b>                                |
| Develop Relationships              | <b>Collaborative Approach &amp; Community Engagement</b>  |

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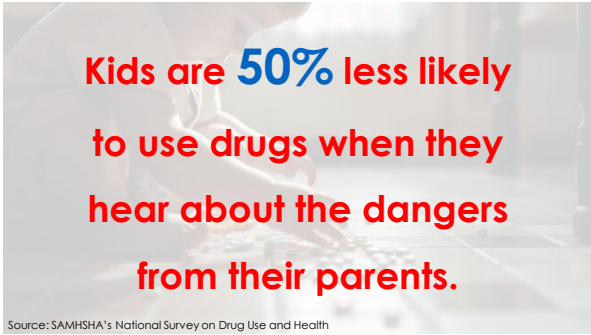
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**90% of adults who struggle with addiction began using controlled substances before they turned 18.**

Source: Partnership to End Addiction

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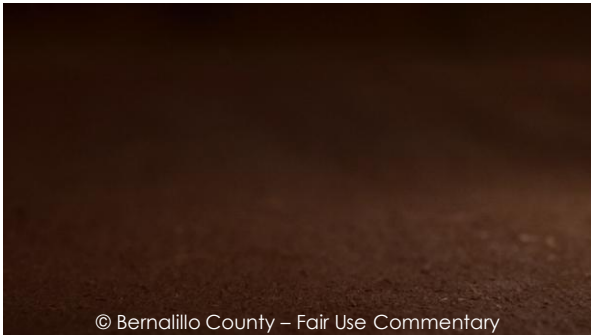
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