

## First Annual NDEWS Report Describes Drug Use Trends in 12 Sentinel Community Sites

Launched in 2014 with the support of the National Institute on Drug Abuse, the National Drug Early Warning System (NDEWS) monitors emerging drug use trends to enable health experts, researchers, and concerned citizens across the country to respond quickly to potential outbreaks of illicit drugs such as heroin and to identify increased or changing use of designer synthetic compounds. Sentinel Community Epidemiologists (SCEs) in 12 Sentinel Community Sites monitor indicators of drug use, consequences, and availability within their site. Below are selected excerpts from the inaugural Sentinel Community Site Reports, which are available on the NDEWS website at [www.ndews.org](http://www.ndews.org).

### Synthetic Cannabinoids and/or Cathinones were discussed by 11 SCEs.

- ♦ **Atlanta Metro:** “. . . ethnographic reporters claim that use of synthetic marijuana remains high, while citing the use of vaporization techniques embedded in e-cigarette devices as a popular method of use.” In addition, “[t]he synthetic cathinone ethylone has replaced methylone in the retail supply of substances being marketed as Molly.” (SCE: *Brian Dew, with Ned Golubovic*)
- ♦ **Texas:** “The synthetic cannabinoid situation is marked by sporadic clusters of overdoses, which may be due to amateur chemists mixing the drugs or bad batches of precursor chemicals. Given the large number of cases reported along the lower border, importation of chemicals from Mexico may be a factor. The chemical ingredients have changed from JWH varieties to AB-CHMINACA, AB-FUBINACA, AB-PINACA, and PB-22.” (SCE: *Jane Maxwell*)
- ♦ **Southeastern Florida (Miami Area):** “The most dramatic emerging drug problem in Southeastern Florida is the second generation synthetic cathinone, *alpha*-PVP, sold using the street name ‘Flakka’ rather than the term ‘gravel’ as found in most other parts of the country. . . . Broward County hospitals are reporting an estimated 20 *alpha*-PVP overdose or excited delirium emergency department cases per day since March 2015.” (SCE: *James Hall*)

### Fentanyl was mentioned as a drug of concern by 9 SCEs.

- ♦ **Philadelphia:** “In the past several years, fentanyl, a powerful synthetic opioid, has re-emerged as a drug threat in Pennsylvania and in Philadelphia. . . . Philadelphia’s MEO [Medical Examiner’s Office] reported 24 fentanyl-related overdose deaths in 2013, while the MEO reported 100 fentanyl-related overdose deaths in 2014.” (SCE: *Suet Lim*)
- ♦ **Wayne County (Detroit Area):** “The most dramatic finding with regards to opioids was the increase in drug-associated deaths with laboratory confirmed fentanyl detected. Over the 3 year period of 2012-2014, the number of deaths increased 160%. However, the actual number of deaths is much lower (52) than the number of deaths with heroin (265).” (SCE: *Cynthia Arfken*)

### Increases in one or more methamphetamine indicators were discussed by 8 SCEs.

- ♦ **Denver Metro:** “Methamphetamine had declined from peak years in 2005-06 through 2010 in the DMA [Denver Metro Area], but has resurged sharply since 2011, with all indicators (treatment admissions, hospital discharges, ED [emergency department] visits, mortality, NFLIS [National Forensic Laboratory Information System] and DCL [Denver Crime Lab] exhibits) on the rise.” (SCE: *Bruce Mendelson*)
- ♦ **Los Angeles County:** “Availability of methamphetamine remains high as evidenced by its accounting for the largest percentage of drugs identified from law enforcement seizures and its declining wholesale price. . . . The trend for methamphetamine was up across all five of the indicators mentioned [seizures, treatment admissions, poison control reports, non-fatal ED cases, and toxicology cases].” (SCE: *Mary-Lynn Brecht*)

### Join the NDEWS Network to Share Information About Emerging Drug Trends

The NDEWS Network is an open virtual community of substance abuse experts and concerned citizens who engage in regular interactions with colleagues across the country, exchanging information and ideas about new and emerging drugs and drug trends. Visit [www.ndews.org](http://www.ndews.org) for information on how to join the Network.