



Nebraska

Drug Threat Assessment



National Drug Intelligence Center
U.S. Department of Justice

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Preface

This report is a strategic assessment that addresses the status and outlook of the drug threat to Nebraska. Analytical judgment determined the threat posed by each drug type or category, taking into account the most current quantitative and qualitative information on availability, demand, production or cultivation, transportation, and distribution, as well as the effects of a particular drug on abusers and society as a whole. While NDIC sought to incorporate the latest available information, a time lag often exists between collection and publication of data, particularly demand-related data sets. NDIC anticipates that this drug threat assessment will be useful to policymakers, law enforcement personnel, and treatment providers at the federal, state, and local levels because it draws upon a broad range of information sources to describe and analyze the drug threat to Nebraska.

Nebraska Drug Threat Assessment

Executive Summary

The production, distribution, and abuse of illicit drugs pose a serious threat to Nebraska. Grand Island, Omaha, Lincoln, and Scottsbluff are the primary drug distribution cities in the state and also serve as transit areas for drugs transported to other states.

Methamphetamine is a principal drug threat to Nebraska, primarily because of the drug's availability and the harmful physical and environmental effects associated with its abuse and production. Law enforcement agencies throughout the state report that the level of methamphetamine availability in their jurisdictions is high. Many also reported the presence of methamphetamine laboratories in their areas, as well as an adverse environmental impact from the laboratories. Methamphetamine produced by Mexican criminal groups in Mexico, California, and southwestern states is the predominant type available in Nebraska. Methamphetamine produced in the state is also available, and seizures of small-scale methamphetamine laboratories have increased. Caucasian local independent producers using the Birch reduction method are the primary in-state methamphetamine producers. Mexican criminal groups transport methamphetamine from Mexico, California, and southwestern states into Nebraska in private and commercial vehicles. These criminal groups also are the primary wholesale distributors of methamphetamine in Nebraska. Mexican criminal groups, Caucasian local independent dealers, street gangs, and outlaw motorcycle gangs distribute retail quantities of methamphetamine from residences, parking lots, or business establishments. Violence associated with methamphetamine distribution and abuse is a concern within the state.

Cocaine poses a significant threat to Nebraska because of its ready availability, highly addictive nature, and association with violent crime. Powdered cocaine is readily available throughout the state, while crack cocaine is primarily available in the metropolitan areas of Lincoln and Omaha. Mexican criminal groups, traveling primarily in private and commercial vehicles, dominate the transportation of powdered cocaine into Nebraska from Mexico through California and southwestern states. These criminal groups dominate wholesale powdered cocaine distribution throughout the state and distribute powdered cocaine at the retail level as well. Local independent dealers and street gangs distribute powdered cocaine at the retail level and convert powdered cocaine into crack for retail distribution at or near its intended distribution site. Retail-level cocaine distribution commonly is prearranged or

is facilitated by pagers, pay phones, and cellular telephones. Distribution typically occurs on street corners and at bars or private residences. The distribution of crack cocaine frequently is associated with violence, particularly aggravated assault and robbery.

Marijuana is the most widely available and frequently abused illicit drug in Nebraska. Most of the marijuana available in the state is produced in Mexico, although some cannabis is cultivated locally. Mexican criminal groups transport marijuana into Nebraska in private and commercial vehicles. Mexican criminal groups and, to a lesser extent, local independent dealers are the primary wholesale and retail marijuana distributors in the state. Street gangs also distribute marijuana at the retail level. Marijuana typically is packaged in sandwich bags and distributed at the retail level from bars, strip clubs, schools, parking lots, residences, businesses, and at concerts.

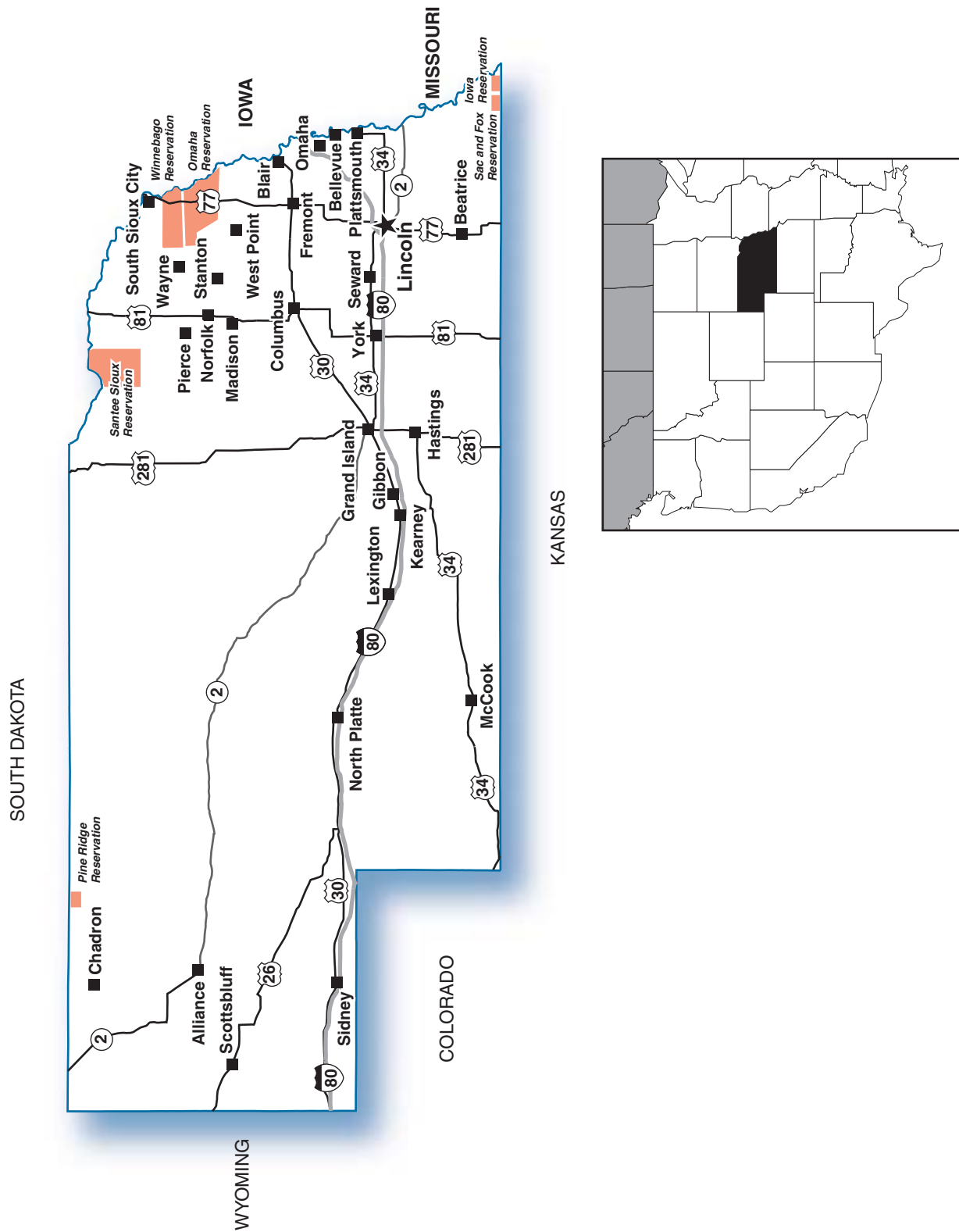
Other dangerous drugs (ODDs) Some other dangerous drugs pose an increasing threat to Nebraska. ODDs include club drugs such as MDMA and GHB (and its analogs); the hallucinogens LSD, psilocybin, and jimsonweed; and diverted pharmaceuticals such as codeine, diazepam (Valium), hydrocodone (Lortab and Vicodin), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), methadone, morphine, oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet, and Percodan), and propoxyphene (Darvocet). Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary distributors of club drugs, which are increasingly available in cities with colleges and universities, and typically are distributed at raves, nightclubs, and bars. Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary distributors of hallucinogens and diverted pharmaceuticals.

Heroin poses a low threat to Nebraska. The availability and abuse of heroin are decreasing in most areas of the state; however, Mexican black tar heroin and brown powdered heroin are available in some areas. No single group dominates the transportation or distribution of heroin in Nebraska; both Mexican criminal groups and Caucasian local independent dealers transport the drug into the state. Wholesale distribution rarely occurs in Nebraska. At the retail level, Mexican criminal groups, local independent dealers, and street gangs distribute heroin.

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Nebraska Drug Threat Assessment



Nebraska.

Note: This map displays features mentioned in the report.



Nebraska

Drug Threat Assessment

Overview

Nebraska ranks thirty-eighth in population with approximately 1.7 million residents. Over 36 percent of the population is concentrated in the cities of Omaha and Lincoln. The state's population is 87.3 percent Caucasian, 5.5 percent Hispanic/Latino, 4.0 percent African American, 1.3 percent Asian, and 0.9 percent American Indian and Alaska Native.

The Hispanic population has increased in Nebraska. A rise in employment in meatpacking plants has resulted in an increase in the number of Hispanic immigrants—primarily Mexican nationals—in Nebraska. In 1999 the Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS), now the Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (BCIS), estimated that Nebraska had 4,000 illegal Hispanic immigrants, primarily Mexican, due in large part to the growth of the meatpacking industry. This migration led the Mexican government to establish a consulate in Omaha in early 2001. INS investigators in Omaha noted a nearly 600 percent increase in the number of undocumented Mexican aliens arrested in the state from 1994 through 1999.

Nebraska has a well-developed transportation infrastructure, and its location in the west central United States makes the state ideal for the movement of licit and illicit goods. Drug transporters use private and commercial vehicles, motor homes,

Fast Facts	
Nebraska	
Population (2001)	1,713,235
U.S. population ranking	38th
Median household income (2001)	\$43,611
Unemployment rate (2001)	3.1%
Land area	76,872 square miles
Capital	Lincoln
Other principal cities	Bellevue, Fremont, Grand Island, Hastings, North Platte, Omaha
Number of counties	93
Principal industries	Agriculture, food processing, manufacturing, meatpacking

and trailers to transport drugs into and through Nebraska. Commercial buses and, to a lesser extent, couriers on airlines and freight and passenger trains are also used to transport illicit drugs.

Nebraska's highway infrastructure facilitates illicit drug transportation into and throughout

the state. Interstate 80 is the principal east-west highway in Nebraska and is a well-known drug transportation route. All drug seizures in Nebraska reported to Operation Pipeline in 2000 occurred on I-80. Illicit drugs also are transported on U.S. Highways 81 and 77, which are north-south routes that traverse eastern Nebraska. State Route 2 and US 30, US 34, and US 281 converge near Grand Island, making the city a primary distribution point for the state.

Operation Pipeline

Operation Pipeline is a national highway interdiction program supported by the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC). Drug seizures from private vehicles are reported to Operation Pipeline by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies operating nationwide along the highways and interstates most frequently used to transport illegal drugs and drug proceeds.

Operation Jetway

Operation Jetway is an EPIC-supported domestic interdiction program. Drug seizures are reported to Operation Jetway by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies across the nation at airports, train stations, bus stations, package shipment facilities, U.S. Post Offices, and airport hotels and motels.

Drugs also are transported into Nebraska via aircraft, although seizures at airports are infrequent. The five primary airports in the state are in Grand Island, Lincoln, North Platte, Omaha, and Scottsbluff; none offer international flights. In June 2000 nearly 1 kilogram of powdered cocaine was seized at the Omaha airport from a courier on a flight originating in Phoenix, Arizona. No seizures of this size have occurred since.

Freight and passenger rail systems in Nebraska also are vulnerable to illicit drug transportation. The Bailey Yard, located in North Platte, covers 2,850 acres and is the world's largest railroad yard; approximately 10,000 railroad cars are processed every 24 hours; however, there have been no seizures from freight trains. Law enforcement authorities occasionally seize illicit drugs from rail

passengers traveling to and through Nebraska. In March 2000 Operation Jetway Task Force officers in Portland, Oregon, seized 1 kilogram of cocaine and approximately 200 grams of methamphetamine from the luggage of a Mexican national on a passenger train bound for Lincoln, Nebraska.

Mexican criminal groups are the primary transporters of illicit drugs into Nebraska. They obtain wholesale quantities of methamphetamine, powdered cocaine, and marijuana and smaller quantities of heroin from Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) and other Mexican criminal groups operating in Mexico, California, and southwestern states. Caucasian local independent dealers also transport methamphetamine, powdered cocaine, marijuana, and small quantities of heroin into Nebraska from California and southwestern states. Some African American street gangs and local independent dealers transport crack cocaine from metropolitan areas in surrounding states.

Mexican criminal groups often employ a variety of individuals to transport drugs, including Mexican nationals, Caucasians, and African Americans. Mexican criminal groups employ, to a lesser extent, some Native Americans to transport illicit drugs into Nebraska and to distribute drugs on reservation lands. There are three Indian reservations located entirely within Nebraska—the Omaha, Santee Sioux, and Winnebago—all in the eastern portion of the state. Three other reservations, the Iowa, Pine Ridge, and Sac and Fox, straddle Nebraska's borders with either Kansas or South Dakota. The South Sioux City Police Department reports that Mexican criminal groups recruit Native Americans from the Omaha and Winnebago reservations to transport drugs.

Mexican criminal groups dominate the wholesale distribution of methamphetamine, powdered cocaine, and marijuana in Nebraska. Law enforcement authorities have identified more than 40 Mexican criminal groups operating in the state. These criminal groups obtain drugs from Mexico-based DTOs and Mexican criminal groups operating in California and southwestern states. According to the Federal Bureau of

Investigation (FBI) Omaha Field Office, Mexican criminal groups in Nebraska range in size from 18 to 100 individuals.

Mexican criminal groups, local independent dealers, street gangs, and outlaw motorcycle gangs (OMGs) distribute drugs at the retail level in Nebraska. Mexican criminal groups distribute methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states; powdered cocaine; Mexico-produced marijuana; and heroin. Local independent dealers also distribute methamphetamine, powdered cocaine, marijuana, and heroin. Street gangs distribute methamphetamine,

powdered and crack cocaine, and marijuana. OMGs also distribute methamphetamine.

From 1997 through 2001, the number of drug-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities in Nebraska varied from drug to drug with increases reported for methamphetamine and cocaine and decreases reported for marijuana and heroin. Data from the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) indicate that methamphetamine-related treatment admissions more than doubled during that period, reflecting the increasing threat the drug poses to Nebraska.

Table 1. Drug-Related Treatment Admissions to Publicly Funded Facilities, Nebraska, 1997–2001

Year	Methamphetamine	Cocaine	Marijuana	Heroin
1997	567	537	1,004	40
1998	701	802	901	15
1999	511	512	696	19
2000	902	794	684	12
2001	1,294	757	862	11

Source: Treatment Episode Data Set.

Juvenile drug abuse is a concern in Nebraska. The 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey reported that, of 1,856 high school students who responded in Nebraska, 20 percent of males and 14 percent of females reported that they were offered, sold, or given an illegal drug on school property during the past 12 months. According to combined data from the 1999 and the 2000 National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), 7.7 percent of those aged 12 to 17 in Nebraska reported having abused an illicit drug within the past month, a rate lower than the nationwide percentage of 9.8 percent.

Drug-related arrests, particularly among adults, are increasing in Nebraska. According to the Nebraska Commission on Law Enforcement and Criminal Justice, the total number of arrests for drug violations in Nebraska, both juvenile and adult, increased 11 percent from 9,059 in 1999 to 10,070 in 2000. The number of juveniles arrested for drug violations increased 2 percent from 1,357 in 1999 to 1,384 in 2000, while the number of adults arrested increased 13 percent from 7,702 in 1999 to 8,686 in 2000.

**Table 2. Percentage of Drug-Related Federal Sentences by Drug Type
Nebraska and United States, FY1997–FY2001**

	All Drugs*	Methamphetamine	Powdered Cocaine	Crack Cocaine	Marijuana	Heroin
Nebraska						
FY1997	50.8	41.4	15.4	17.0	13.8	9.7
FY1998	49.8	57.3	11.0	28.6	2.9	0.0
FY1999	71.5	66.6	9.3	14.2	6.5	1.0
FY2000	65.9	63.2	9.9	15.8	7.1	1.9
FY2001	59.7	66.3	6.5	16.5	10.4	0.4
United States						
FY1997	38.7	10.2	25.2	24.4	27.5	9.7
FY1998	40.2	11.4	23.4	23.9	30.0	8.9
FY1999	41.0	12.8	22.1	22.9	31.5	8.0
FY2000	39.8	14.5	22.8	21.4	31.2	7.7
FY2001	41.2	14.2	22.1	20.4	32.8	7.2

Source: U.S. Sentencing Commission.

* Represents the percentage of federal sentences that are drug-related.

In Nebraska the percentage of federal sentences that were drug-related was higher than the national percentage in fiscal year (FY) 2001. According to the U.S. Sentencing Commission (USSC), drug-related sentences accounted for 60 percent of all federal sentences in the state in FY2001 compared with 41 percent nationally. (See Table 2.) Over 66 percent of all drug-related federal sentences in Nebraska during FY2001 were methamphetamine-related, significantly higher than the national rate of 14 percent.

The financial impact on Nebraska's government from substance abuse-related costs is significant. The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University reported that in 1998—the most recent year for which these data are available—Nebraska spent over \$291 million—approximately \$176 per resident—on substance abuse-related costs. This accounted for over 8 percent of the state's total budget.

Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine is a principal drug threat to Nebraska, primarily because of the drug's ready availability and the harmful physical and environmental effects associated with its abuse and production. Law enforcement agencies throughout the state report that the level of methamphetamine availability in their jurisdictions is high. Many also reported the presence of methamphetamine laboratories in their areas, as well as an adverse environmental impact from the laboratories. Methamphetamine produced by Mexican criminal groups in Mexico, California, and southwestern states is the predominant type available in Nebraska. Methamphetamine produced in the state is also available, and seizures of small-scale methamphetamine laboratories have

increased. Caucasian local independent producers using the Birch reduction method are the primary in-state methamphetamine producers. Mexican criminal groups transport methamphetamine from Mexico, California, and southwestern states into Nebraska in private and commercial vehicles. These criminal groups also are the primary wholesale distributors of methamphetamine in Nebraska. Mexican criminal groups, Caucasian local independent dealers, street gangs, and OMGs distribute retail quantities of methamphetamine from residences, parking lots, or business establishments. Violence associated with methamphetamine distribution and abuse is a concern within the state.

Abuse

Law enforcement officials in Nebraska report that methamphetamine abuse is a significant problem throughout the state. According to the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) National Drug Threat Survey 2002, all Nebraska respondents who reported methamphetamine abuse in their jurisdictions (18) indicated that abuse was at a high level.

The number of methamphetamine-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities more than doubled from 1997 through 2001. TEDS data indicate that methamphetamine-related treatment admissions in Nebraska increased from 567 in 1997 to 1,294 in 2001. In addition, there were more treatment admissions for abuse of methamphetamine than for abuse of any other illicit drug in 2000 and 2001. (See Table 1 on page 3.)

Methamphetamine has been a factor in drug deaths in the Omaha metropolitan area. According to Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) mortality data, the number of methamphetamine-related deaths in the Omaha metropolitan area fluctuated from 1997 through 2001; seven deaths were

NDIC National Drug Threat Survey

The National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) 2002 was administered by NDIC to a representative sample of state and local law enforcement agencies throughout the United States to assess the availability, abuse, and overall threat posed by all major drugs. NDIC received 2,906 survey responses from law enforcement agencies, an overall response rate of 80 percent. Survey respondents were asked to rank the greatest drug threats in their areas and to indicate the level of availability and abuse for each major drug type. They also were asked to provide information on specific groups involved in the transportation and distribution of illicit drugs. Responding agencies also provided narrative assessments of various aspects of the overall drug situation and the threat posed by specific drugs in their areas. Survey responses are used by NDIC to substantiate and augment drug threat information obtained from other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

Mortality Data

For the purposes of DAWN reporting, mortality data for the Omaha metropolitan area represent the following counties: Douglas, Sarpy, and Washington.

reported in 1997, five in 1998, three in 1999, seven in 2000, and eight in 2001. (See text box above.)

According to the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program (ADAM), 11 percent of adult male arrestees in Omaha tested positive for methamphetamine in 2000. Over 20 percent of Caucasian, more than 8 percent of Hispanic, and

Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program

The ADAM Program involves two components: a questionnaire administered by a trained interviewer to an arrestee in a booking facility and a urine sample collected from the arrestee within 48 hours of arrest. In 2000 data were collected for 39 metropolitan areas across the United States. ADAM data for Omaha were collected from randomly selected arrestees at a facility in Douglas County.

nearly 2 percent of African American male arrestees tested positive for methamphetamine.

Availability

Methamphetamine is readily available throughout the state. Law enforcement officials throughout Nebraska report that methamphetamine availability is high. According to NDTs 2002, all of the 18 Nebraska law enforcement respondents who reported on methamphetamine availability in their jurisdictions indicated that availability was high. Methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states is the predominant type available in Nebraska; however, the availability of locally produced methamphetamine is increasing. Crystal methamphetamine, commonly known as ice, also is available in the state. The South Sioux City Police Department occasionally seizes small quantities of crystal methamphetamine, and in September 2001 the Nebraska State Patrol seized 2 pounds of crystal methamphetamine on I-80.

The ready availability of methamphetamine in Nebraska also is reflected in seizure data. According to Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Federal-wide Drug Seizure System (FDSS) data, federal law enforcement officials in Nebraska seized 33 kilograms of methamphetamine in 1998, 14 kilograms in 1999, 32 kilograms in 2000, and 48 kilograms in 2001. (See Table 3 on page 7.) Law enforcement authorities that reported to Operation Pipeline seized over 5

Crystal Methamphetamine

Crystal methamphetamine is a colorless, odorless form of smokable d-methamphetamine resembling glass fragments or ice shavings. It is produced using a "washing" technique that involves dissolving d-methamphetamine in a solvent and allowing the liquid to evaporate. In most areas of the United States where crystal methamphetamine is available, its production and distribution normally are associated with Asian and, increasingly, Mexican traffickers.

kilograms of methamphetamine in 1999 and more than 23 kilograms in 2000. State and local seizures of methamphetamine also are significant. The Omaha Metro Task Force, composed of nine agencies (FBI, IRS, NSP, Douglas County Sheriff's Office, Omaha Police Department, Sarpy County Sheriff's Department, La Vista Police Department, Papillion Police Department, and Bellvue Police Department), seized over 76 kilograms in 2000 and more than 38 kilograms in 2001. The Nebraska State Patrol seized 30 kilograms of methamphetamine in 2001.

The percentage of drug-related federal sentences that were methamphetamine-related in Nebraska in FY2001 was nearly five times the national percentage. According to USSC data in

Table 3. Federal Drug Seizures in Kilograms, Nebraska, 1998–2001

	Methamphetamine	Cocaine	Marijuana	Heroin
1998	33.2	7.9	338.5	0.1
1999	14.1	12.3	2,120.4	0.0
2000	31.6	195.6	1,334.8	0.0
2001	48.3	429.7	437.7	0.0

Source: Federal-wide Drug Seizure System.

FY2001, 66 percent of drug-related federal sentences in Nebraska were methamphetamine-related—the second highest rate in the nation. (See Table 2 on page 4.) The number of sentences for methamphetamine-related offenses in Nebraska increased dramatically from 51 in FY1997 to 185 in FY2001. Only four states—California, Texas, Iowa, and Missouri—had a higher number of methamphetamine-related sentences in FY2001.

Prices for methamphetamine in Nebraska vary by location and amount sold. In 2003 methamphetamine sold for \$3,500 to \$8,000 per pound throughout Nebraska. Ounce prices were as low as \$300 in Grand Island and as high as \$1,200 in Omaha. The Nebraska State Patrol in North Platte reported that methamphetamine sold for \$65 to

\$85 per gram. Throughout Nebraska, prices for Mexico- and locally produced methamphetamine were approximately the same.

The purity of methamphetamine in Nebraska varies depending on its origin and level of distribution. For example, in 2002 the Omaha Police Department reported that locally produced methamphetamine had a higher retail purity level—75 to 90 percent—than methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states. According to the Grand Island Police Department and the Tri-City Drug Task Force, the retail purity level of Mexican source methamphetamine decreased from an average of 55 percent in 1997 to 14 percent in 2000, 11 percent in 2001, and less than 10 percent in 2002. The reason for this significant decline in purity is not known.

Violence

The potential for violence resulting from methamphetamine abuse is a concern within the state. Individuals addicted to methamphetamine are unpredictable and often violent, endangering themselves and others. These users are most dangerous during the tweaking stage, the point at which the euphoric effects of methamphetamine diminish. Methamphetamine abusers often are paranoid and delusional and frequently arm themselves against perceived threats. According to ADAM data, almost 10 percent of adult men arrested in Omaha for violent offenses in 2000 tested positive for methamphetamine.

Violence associated with methamphetamine distribution also is a concern in Nebraska. Methamphetamine distributors sometimes commit violent crimes to protect their territory. Street gangs that distribute methamphetamine have reportedly committed aggravated assault, drive-by shooting, and homicide. Respondents to the NDIC National Gang Survey 2000 reported that the following gangs distribute methamphetamine and commit violent crimes in Nebraska: East Side Locos in Grand Island; 18th Street, Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples, and Lomas 13 in Lincoln; and Sureños 13 in Omaha.

Tweaking

As the euphoric effects of methamphetamine diminish, abusers enter the tweaking stage in which they are prone to violence, delusions, paranoia, and feelings of emptiness and dysphoria. During the tweaking stage, the user often has not slept in days and, consequently, is extremely irritable. The “tweaker” also craves more methamphetamine, which results in frustration and contributes to anxiety and restlessness. In this stage the methamphetamine user may become violent without provocation. Case histories indicate that tweakers have reacted negatively at the mere sight of a police uniform.

Production

Mexican criminal groups using the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus reduction method in high volume laboratories in Mexico, California, and southwestern states produce most of the methamphetamine available in Nebraska. (See text box on page 9.) Local independent producers, most of whom are Caucasians, also produce methamphetamine in Nebraska, but to a lesser extent. They use the Birch reduction method to produce gram and ounce quantities of methamphetamine for personal use and for limited distribution to friends and associates. In Cass County Hispanic local independent dealers with ties to street gangs in Omaha, particularly the Lomas street gang, also produce methamphetamine.

Methamphetamine laboratory seizures in Nebraska are increasing. According to the EPIC National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System, there were 41 methamphetamine laboratories seized in Nebraska in 2000 and 133 in 2001. Laboratory seizures include operational laboratories as well as chemicals/glassware/equipment and dumpsites. The Nebraska State Patrol seized 213 methamphetamine laboratories, dumpsites, or chemicals and glassware statewide in 2001 (some of these seizures may have been reported to EPIC). The Omaha Metro Task Force seized 21 methamphetamine laboratories in 2000 and 36 laboratories in 2001. In Plattsmouth—a city with 7,500 residents located south of Omaha in Cass County—police seized more than 50 laboratories or dumpsites in 2000, earning the city the nickname “Plattsmeth.” Most methamphetamine

laboratories are relatively small, rudimentary, and portable, making detection a challenge for law enforcement authorities. In Nebraska law enforcement authorities seize laboratories from apartments and homes, hotel rooms, vehicles, and abandoned barns and farmhouses.

Chemicals used in methamphetamine production are readily available in Nebraska. Anhydrous ammonia often is stolen from farms and farm supply outlets. Ephedrine and pseudoephedrine can be extracted from diet pills and many over-the-counter cold medicines using coffee filters, coffeepots, tabletop grills, and microwave ovens. Iodine can be purchased at local feed stores, and lithium often is extracted from camera batteries. In Omaha law enforcement authorities have asked store clerks at convenience stores, gas stations, and grocery stores to limit the sale of common household items such as cold medicines containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine, gasoline additives, rubbing alcohol, drain cleaner, distilled water, lye, and coffee filters in an effort to help curb the illegal use of such items by methamphetamine producers.

The Birch reduction method of methamphetamine production is common in Nebraska, as well as in most other agricultural states, because of the wide availability of anhydrous ammonia, which is legitimately used as a fertilizer. Methamphetamine abusers in Otoe County refer to locally produced methamphetamine as Annie because it is produced with anhydrous ammonia using the Birch reduction method. In an attempt to curb

Methamphetamine Production Methods

Ephedrine/Pseudoephedrine Reduction:

Hydriodic acid/red phosphorus. The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, hydriodic acid, and red phosphorus. This method can yield multipound quantities of high quality d-methamphetamine and often is associated with Mexican DTOs and criminal groups.

Iodine/red phosphorus. The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, iodine, and red phosphorus. The required hydriodic acid in this variation of the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method is produced by the reaction of iodine in water with red phosphorus. This method yields high quality d-methamphetamine.

Iodine/hypophosphorous acid. The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, iodine, and hypophosphorous acid. The required hydriodic acid in this variation of the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method is produced by the reaction of iodine in water with hypophosphorous acid. Known as the hypo method, this method yields lower quality d-methamphetamine. Hypophosphorous acid is more prone than red phosphorus to cause a fire and can produce deadly phosphine gas.

Birch. The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, anhydrous ammonia, and sodium or lithium metal. Also known as the Nazi method, this method typically yields ounce quantities of high quality d-methamphetamine and often is used by independent dealers and producers.

Phenyl-2-propanone:

P2P. The principal chemicals are phenyl-2-propanone, aluminum, methylamine, and mercuric acid. This method yields lower quality dl-methamphetamine and traditionally was associated with OMGs.

anhydrous ammonia diversion, the state legislature enacted a law in September 2001 that makes it illegal for a person to possess anhydrous ammonia with the intent to produce methamphetamine.

The iodine/red phosphorus method is used less frequently to produce methamphetamine in Nebraska. Red phosphorus laboratories have been seized in Cass, Nance, and Platte Counties and Columbus, Fremont, and South Sioux City.

Methamphetamine production creates serious safety and environmental concerns. The production process creates toxic and hazardous waste that endangers law enforcement personnel, emergency response teams, children (particularly those in the

homes of methamphetamine producers), and the environment. The chemicals used in the production process are toxic, highly flammable, and yield poisonous vapors. Production of 1 pound of methamphetamine yields approximately 5 to 7 pounds of toxic waste. Methamphetamine laboratory operators often dump chemicals in areas accessible to the public. These chemicals contaminate soil, streams and rivers, and public sewer systems. Remediation of laboratory sites costs federal, state, and local governments millions of dollars every year. The average cost of cleaning one site is \$5,000; however, costs can exceed \$100,000 for larger sites.

Transportation

Mexican criminal groups are the primary transporters of methamphetamine into Nebraska. These groups transport the drug from Mexico, California, and southwestern states in hidden compartments in private and commercial vehicles. U.S. Highways 77 and 81 frequently are used to transport the drug

to the eastern half of Nebraska. Law enforcement authorities report that Mexican criminal groups transport methamphetamine from Mexico and California to Fremont. In addition, Mexican criminal groups in Michoacan and Juarez as well as Sinaloan Cowboys in Mexico and in Modesto

and Los Angeles, California, transport methamphetamine to South Sioux City. Typically, Mexican criminal groups that supply methamphetamine to Lincoln transport the drug through Albuquerque, New Mexico, and cities in Colorado including Denver, Fort Collins, and Greeley, and then travel eastward along I-80. Members of Hispanic street gangs—18th Street, Florencia, Sureños 13, and Lomas—transport methamphetamine obtained from associates in Southern California to the Omaha area for distribution.

Hispanic immigrants, primarily Mexican nationals who have relocated to Nebraska seeking employment in the meatpacking industry, are heavily recruited by Mexican criminal groups to transport methamphetamine. Cities in Nebraska where meatpacking operations are located such as Grand Island, Lexington, Lincoln, Omaha, and South Sioux City have become primary destinations

for methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states. In South Sioux City Mexican criminal groups also recruit Native Americans from the Omaha and Winnebago Reservations as couriers. Transporters and distributors affiliated with Mexican criminal groups frequently hide on reservation property to avoid detection by law enforcement.

Nebraska is a transit area for methamphetamine intended for distribution in other states. Law enforcement officials in Nebraska indicate that methamphetamine bound for Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, and Michigan is transported through Nebraska on I-80. In September 2000 the Nebraska State Patrol searched a private vehicle heading east on I-80 and seized 19 pounds of methamphetamine hidden in the speaker compartment. The vehicle was en route from Los Angeles to Minneapolis.

Distribution

Mexican criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of methamphetamine in the state. Mexican criminal groups provide wholesale quantities of methamphetamine to distributors—often Hispanic immigrants working in meatpacking plants—whom they recruit. These distributors blend easily with the large Hispanic population that has been drawn to the state because of employment opportunities in the meatpacking industry. Caucasian local independent dealers also distribute methamphetamine at the wholesale level in Nebraska, but to a lesser extent. Law enforcement officials in Beatrice and Sidney identified Caucasian local independent dealers as wholesale distributors of methamphetamine in those jurisdictions.

Law enforcement respondents to the NDTs 2002 in Omaha and Lincoln reported that Mexican criminal groups and local independent dealers distribute methamphetamine at the retail level in their areas. Also in Lincoln some Vietnamese and Laotian independent dealers distribute methamphetamine at the retail level, while in Omaha

Methamphetamine Distribution Network Discovered

In 2002 law enforcement authorities in McCook reported that they had identified a Mexican criminal group that transported 60 to 100 kilograms of Mexico-produced methamphetamine to a wholesale distributor in Grand Island each month. The wholesale distributor supplied pound quantities of methamphetamine to retail distributors in the McCook and Lincoln areas. The retail distributors in turn sold ounce quantities of the drugs to users in their areas.

Source: McCook Police Department; Red Willow County Sheriff's Office.

Hispanic gangs such as Sureños 13, 18th Street, Florencia, and Lomas serve as retail distributors of the drug. Street gangs such as Must Be Criminals in Omaha and West Side Locos in South Sioux City—which are multiethnic gangs composed of Caucasian and Hispanic members—also distribute methamphetamine at the retail level.

Caucasian local independent dealers distribute retail quantities of locally produced methamphetamine throughout the state. Members of the Hells Angels OMG distribute methamphetamine to

close associates. Retail distribution of methamphetamine in Nebraska typically occurs in residences, parking lots, or business establishments such as bars, strip clubs, and taverns.

Cocaine

Cocaine poses a significant threat to Nebraska because of its ready availability, highly addictive nature, and association with violent crime. Powdered cocaine is readily available throughout the state, while crack cocaine is primarily available in the metropolitan areas of Lincoln and Omaha. Mexican criminal groups, traveling primarily in private and commercial vehicles, dominate the transportation of powdered cocaine into Nebraska from Mexico through California and southwestern states. These criminal groups dominate wholesale powdered cocaine distribution throughout the state

and distribute powdered cocaine at the retail level as well. Local independent dealers and street gangs distribute powdered cocaine at the retail level and convert powdered cocaine into crack for retail distribution at or near its intended distribution site. Retail-level cocaine distribution commonly is prearranged or is facilitated by pagers, pay phones, and cellular telephones. Distribution typically occurs on street corners and at bars or private residences. The distribution of crack cocaine frequently is associated with violence, particularly aggravated assault and robbery.

Abuse

Law enforcement officials in Nebraska report that cocaine abuse is common. According to responses to the NDTs 2002, law enforcement officials in Chadron, Columbus, Douglas County, and Omaha reported that levels of powdered cocaine abuse were high in their jurisdictions. Law enforcement officials in Douglas County, Lincoln, and Omaha reported high levels of crack abuse. Law enforcement officials in Fremont, Grand Island, Lincoln, North Platte, Seward, and York reported that levels of powdered cocaine abuse were moderate, while officials in Columbus reported that levels of crack cocaine abuse were moderate. According to combined data from the 1999 and the 2000 NHSDA, 1.4 percent of Nebraska residents reported having abused cocaine at least once in the year prior to the survey, comparable to the percentage nationwide (1.6%).

Cocaine-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities in Nebraska increased from

537 in 1997 to 757 in 2001, according to TEDS. (See Table 1 on page 3.) In 2001 most admissions (612) were associated with the abuse of smoked cocaine (crack); the remainder (145) administered the drug via another method or did not report a method when seeking treatment.

Cocaine was a factor in more deaths in the Omaha metropolitan area than either methamphetamine or heroin each year from 1997 through 2001. According to DAWN mortality data, the number of cocaine-related deaths fluctuated in the Omaha metropolitan area from 1997 through 2001; 9 deaths were reported in 1997, 14 in 1998, 4 in 1999, 11 in 2000, and 9 in 2001.

ADAM data for Omaha indicate that 18 percent of adult male arrestees tested positive for cocaine in 2000. Approximately 25 percent of African American, 17 percent of Hispanic, and 12 percent of Caucasian male arrestees in Omaha tested positive for the drug.

Availability

Powdered cocaine is readily available throughout most of the state, while crack cocaine is primarily available in the metropolitan areas of Lincoln and Omaha. According to responses to the NDTs 2002, law enforcement officials in Omaha reported that powdered cocaine and crack cocaine were readily available in their jurisdiction. Law enforcement officials in Lincoln and North Platte reported that both forms of cocaine were moderately available in their jurisdictions.

Seizure data also reflect the ready availability of cocaine in Nebraska. According to FDSS data, federal law enforcement officials in Nebraska seized 8 kilograms of cocaine in 1998, 12 kilograms in 1999, 196 kilograms in 2000, and 430 kilograms in 2001. (See Table 3 on page 7.) Law enforcement authorities that reported to Operation Pipeline seized 14 kilograms of cocaine in 1999 and 202 kilograms in 2000. In 2001 the Omaha Police Department seized almost 53 kilograms of cocaine, and in 2000 the Lincoln Police Department seized 437 grams of powdered cocaine and over 61 grams of crack cocaine.

The percentage of drug-related federal sentences that were cocaine-related in Nebraska in

FY2001 was lower than the national percentage. According to USSC data in FY2001, 23 percent of drug-related federal sentences in Nebraska were for cocaine-related offenses compared with 42 percent nationally. (See Table 2 on page 4.) The number of federal sentences resulting from powdered cocaine violations in Nebraska remained relatively stable with 19 in FY1997 and 18 in FY2001. The number of federal sentences associated with crack cocaine violations more than doubled—from 21 to 46—during the same period.

Price and purity data for powdered and crack cocaine fluctuate depending on location and amount sold. In the first quarter of FY2003 powdered cocaine sold for \$18,000 to \$24,000 per kilogram, according to the DEA Omaha District Office. During the same time frame, throughout Nebraska prices for powdered cocaine ranged from \$225 to \$1,800 per ounce and \$50 to \$110 per gram. In the first quarter of FY2003 crack cocaine sold for \$1,200 per ounce and \$100 per gram in Omaha, according to the DEA Omaha District Office. Purity levels of powdered cocaine statewide ranged from 90 to 95 percent for wholesale quantities and 20 to 97 percent for retail quantities.

Violence

Violence associated with crack and, to a lesser extent, powdered cocaine contributes to the magnitude of the threat to Nebraska. Crack abusers often commit violent crimes to support their addictions, and crack distributors commonly commit violent crimes to protect their territories. According to ADAM data, 13 percent of adult males arrested for violent offenses tested positive for cocaine in Omaha during 2000. The Omaha Police Department reports that crack cocaine-related drug disputes and turf battles are common. Street gang members who distribute powdered and crack cocaine often are armed and commit aggravated assault and robbery. Respondents to the NDIC National Gang Survey

2000 reported that street gangs in Nebraska that distribute cocaine also commit violent crimes. These gangs include East Side Locos in Grand Island; 18th Street, Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples, and Lomas 13 in Lincoln; and Sureños 13 in Omaha.

Omaha Cocaine Supplier Murdered

According to the Omaha Police Department, in March 2000 an Omaha cocaine distributor murdered his source of supply after the distributor and an associate had stolen 1 kilogram of cocaine from the supplier.

Source: Omaha Police Department.

Production

Coca is not cultivated nor is powdered cocaine produced in Nebraska. The drug is produced in South America, primarily Colombia. Retail distributors commonly convert powdered cocaine into crack in the state on an as-needed basis in an attempt to avoid federal penalties that

are harsher for possession of crack than for possession of powdered cocaine. Crack conversion commonly occurs in stash houses or homes of local independent dealers and street gang members near distribution sites.

Transportation

Mexican criminal groups are the primary transporters of the wholesale quantities of powdered cocaine available in Nebraska. They generally smuggle the drug from Mexico through California and southwestern states to Nebraska. A common route used to transport powdered cocaine is I-15, which traverses Southern California, Nevada, and the northwestern corner of Arizona then connects with I-80 in northern Utah. Mexican criminal groups also transport powdered cocaine into Nebraska from Denver, Colorado; Kansas City, Missouri; Chicago, Illinois; and Las Vegas, Nevada. Powdered cocaine also is transported to Lincoln from transshipment points in Georgia and Florida. Cocaine destined for Nebraska has been seized in other states such as Colorado, Kansas, and Utah.

Street gangs also transport powdered cocaine into the state. A 2001 investigation of the Omaha South Family Bloods street gang revealed a cocaine transportation and distribution network with ties to Mexican sources in Inglewood, Long Beach, Los Angeles, Oakland, and San Bernardino, California. The gang is believed to have transported as much as 1,000 kilograms of powdered cocaine from California to Omaha during a 2-year period.

Transporters typically conceal cocaine in hidden compartments within commercial and private vehicles, transport the drug with legitimate items such as livestock, or conceal it in luggage. In March 2002 the Nebraska State Patrol seized 70 pounds

of powdered cocaine from a vehicle on I-80 near Grand Island. The cocaine was concealed in a modified compartment in the roof of the vehicle. In January 2002 the Nebraska State Patrol seized 53 pounds of powdered cocaine concealed in a false compartment located in the roof of a van. In May 2001 after a 3-month investigation, members of the Omaha Police Department and the FBI arrested a 23-year-old individual traveling by bus from Oakland, California. The man was carrying 4 kilograms of powdered cocaine in his luggage. Authorities believe the man had transported many other shipments of powdered cocaine by bus before being apprehended. In 2001 law enforcement authorities in Lincoln reported that powdered cocaine was concealed in the body cavities of live cattle that had been shipped to Nebraska. The cattle were transported in trucks from Texas to Denver and then to Nebraska and Kansas.

Local independent dealers and street gangs transport some crack cocaine into Nebraska from surrounding states, although most of the crack available in Nebraska is converted within the state. Law enforcement officials in Lincoln report that most of the crack cocaine seized in their area that has not been converted locally is transported from Omaha; Kansas City, Kansas; Kansas City, Missouri; and Chicago and Elgin, Illinois. Sources for crack cocaine in South Sioux City include Osceola, Arkansas, and Chicago, Illinois.

Cocaine destined for other states often is transported through Nebraska. Law enforcement agencies have seized cocaine from transporters traveling through Nebraska en route to other states including Illinois, New York, Ohio, and Pennsylvania. Powdered cocaine is transported from South Sioux City to Cherokee and Denison, Iowa. Crack cocaine is transported from South

Sioux City to Sioux Falls, South Dakota. In January 2002 Nebraska State Patrol officials seized 26 pounds of powdered cocaine destined for Detroit during a traffic stop. In another routine traffic stop on I-80 near the Gibbon interchange in March 2001, the Nebraska State Patrol seized 765 pounds of powdered cocaine destined for Illinois or New York.

Distribution

Mexican criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine throughout the state, most notably in Grand Island, Lincoln, and Omaha. Mexican criminal groups in Nebraska have ties to other Mexican criminal groups in Los Angeles, California, and Brownsville, Texas. Local independent dealers and street gangs also distribute some powdered cocaine at the wholesale level throughout the state. According to the Bellevue Police Department, members of Sureños 13, Lomas, and Sinaloan Cowboys supply powdered cocaine to local independent dealers in Omaha and Bellevue.

Several Nebraska cities serve as wholesale cocaine distribution centers for the state. Nebraska cities near I-80, particularly Grand Island, Lincoln, and Omaha, as well as cities along secondary transportation routes—such as US 26 and US 30—serve as distribution centers and transit points for cocaine destined for other cities throughout the state. Scottsbluff, located along US 26, serves as a distribution city for Alliance. Columbus and Fremont—located along US 30—serve as distribution cities for West Point. Norfolk—located along US 81—serves as a distribution city for Madison, Pierce, and Stanton. South Sioux City—located along US 77—serves as a distribution city for Denison and Fort Dodge, Iowa.

Mexican criminal groups, local independent dealers, and street gangs distribute powdered cocaine at the retail level. Mexican criminal groups, as well as Caucasian and African American independent dealers, distribute powdered cocaine in Columbus, Norfolk, and West Point.

Retail powdered cocaine distribution commonly is prearranged or conducted using pagers, pay phones, and cellular telephones; it typically occurs in residences, on street corners, and at bars.

Gang Members Transport Powdered Cocaine Into Nebraska

A 2001 investigation of Omaha South Family Bloods revealed that gang members transported wholesale quantities of powdered cocaine from California into Omaha. Members distributed powdered cocaine and crack cocaine to retail distributors in Nebraska, as well as to associates in Memphis, Tennessee, and in Kansas City, Kansas and Missouri. More than 50 people, including Omaha South Family Bloods members and other distributors in Inglewood, California, were indicted on federal drug conspiracy charges.

Source: Omaha Police Department.

Nebraska-based street gangs are the principal retail level distributors of crack cocaine in the state, particularly in the Lincoln and Omaha areas. Street gangs that distribute crack cocaine at the retail level in Lincoln include the Vice Lords, Bloods, Airport Crips, and Cooper Park Locos gangs. Occasionally, gang members from Omaha travel to Lincoln to sell small quantities of crack because of the higher profit margin in Lincoln. Members of 37th Street Crips, an Omaha-based gang, associate with other gang members and affiliates in California to transport crack cocaine into Nebraska. There are a small number of Asian gangs in the Lincoln area that distribute crack

cocaine at the retail level. The most active are Baggy Boyz and Asian Boyz. Baggy Boyz is a Vietnamese gang whose members frequently travel to St. Louis to purchase crack cocaine. Asian Boyz

is a Cambodian and Laotian gang whose members often purchase crack cocaine in Wichita, where there is a large Asian gang presence.

Marijuana

Marijuana is the most widely available and frequently abused illicit drug in Nebraska. Most of the marijuana available in the state is produced in Mexico, although some cannabis is cultivated locally. Mexican criminal groups transport marijuana from Mexico, California, and southwestern states into Nebraska in private and commercial vehicles. Mexican criminal groups and, to a lesser

extent, local independent dealers are the primary wholesale and retail marijuana distributors in the state. Street gangs also distribute marijuana at the retail level. Marijuana typically is packaged in sandwich bags and distributed at the retail level from bars, strip clubs, schools, parking lots, residences, businesses, and at concerts.

Abuse

Law enforcement officials in Nebraska report that marijuana abuse is high. According to responses to the NDTs 2002, of the 18 Nebraska respondents who reported on marijuana abuse in their jurisdictions, 14 indicated that abuse was at a high level. Law enforcement authorities in Beatrice and Saunders County indicated that marijuana abuse was moderate in their areas.

Although marijuana is the most commonly abused illicit drug in Nebraska, marijuana-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities decreased from 1997 through 2001. TEDS data indicate that the number of marijuana-related treatment admissions decreased from 1,004 in 1997 to

862 in 2001. (See Table 1 on page 3.) In addition, survey data indicate that abuse of marijuana in Nebraska is lower than reported rates of marijuana abuse nationwide. According to the 1999 and 2000 NHSDA, 3.5 percent of Nebraska residents reported having abused marijuana in the month prior to the survey compared with 4.8 percent of U.S. residents nationwide.

ADAM data for Omaha indicate that 48 percent of adult male arrestees in 2000 tested positive for marijuana. In 2000 a higher percentage of African American male arrestees (56%) tested positive for marijuana than Caucasian (43%) or Hispanic (27%) male arrestees.

Availability

Marijuana produced in Mexico is the most widely available form of the drug in the state; however, marijuana produced in Nebraska also is available. According to the NDTs 2002, of the 18 Nebraska respondents who reported on marijuana availability in their jurisdictions, 14 indicated that availability was high and 4 indicated that availability was moderate.

Seizure data reflect the ready availability of marijuana in Nebraska. According to FDSS data,

federal law enforcement officials in Nebraska seized 339 kilograms in 1998, 2,120 kilograms in 1999, 1,335 kilograms in 2000, and 438 kilograms in 2001. (See Table 3 on page 7.) Law enforcement authorities that reported to Operation Pipeline seized over 2,501 kilograms in 1999 and over 1,009 kilograms in 2000. The Omaha Police Department seized almost 497 kilograms of marijuana in 2001.

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The percentage of drug-related federal sentences that were marijuana-related in Nebraska was significantly lower than the national percentage in FY2001. According to USSC data in FY2001, 10 percent of drug-related federal sentences in Nebraska resulted from marijuana offenses compared with 33 percent nationally. (See Table 2 on page 4.) The number of federal sentences for marijuana violations in Nebraska increased from 17 in FY1997 to 29 in FY2001.

Marijuana prices vary by location and amount sold. In 2003 Mexico-produced marijuana sold for \$600 to \$1,800 per pound throughout Nebraska. In McCook some marijuana that sold for \$1,600 to \$1,800 per pound was purchased from Mexican sources in Greeley, Colorado, for \$250 per pound. High-potency marijuana from hybrid cannabis plants in western Nebraska was sold to distributors in Colorado for \$2,000 per pound. Marijuana sold for \$85 per ounce in York.

The average THC (tetrahydrocannabinol) content of marijuana seized in Nebraska is higher than the average THC content nationwide. According to the Marijuana Potency Monitoring Program (MPMP) 2000 report, the average THC level for marijuana (excluding ditchweed) in Nebraska in 1999 was 8.6 percent, while the national average was 4.8 percent. Ditchweed lacks sufficient levels of THC, the compound that gives marijuana its potency, to have value as an illicit drug; however, ditchweed is harvested and mixed with higher-grade marijuana.

Marijuana Potency Monitoring Program

A primary source of marijuana potency data for the United States is the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) Marijuana Potency Monitoring Program (MPMP), a project based at the University of Mississippi at Oxford. The MPMP extracts and measures the THC level in samples provided by DEA and state and local law enforcement agencies.

Violence

Violence has been associated with marijuana distribution and abuse in Nebraska, but to a limited extent. According to ADAM data, 40 percent of adult males arrested for violent crime tested positive for marijuana in Omaha in 2000. Domestic cannabis growers often are armed and use booby traps to protect their cultivation sites from law enforcement authorities. Firearms occasionally are seized from cannabis growing sites in Nebraska. Domestic Cannabis Eradication/

Suppression Program (DCE/SP) statistics indicate that law enforcement officials in Nebraska seized 23 weapons in 1998, none in 1999, and 5 in 2000 during marijuana eradication operations. Respondents to the NDIC National Gang Survey 2000 reported that many street gangs that distribute marijuana also commit violent crimes in the state. These gangs include East Side Locos in Grand Island and 18th Street, Bloods, Crips, and Lomas 13 in Lincoln.

Production

Most of the marijuana available in Nebraska is produced in Mexico; however, some cannabis is cultivated throughout the state. A large percentage of locally cultivated cannabis is grown outdoors; however, cannabis growers increasingly are using sophisticated indoor cultivation operations. Plants

are increasingly cultivated indoors because they generally yield high potency marijuana, which sells for a higher price. Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary cannabis cultivators in the state. Cannabis is cultivated both indoors and outdoors in Lincoln, Norfolk, and Omaha.

In Nebraska outdoor cannabis cultivation sites typically have more than twice as many cannabis plants per site as indoor operations. According to the DCE/SP, law enforcement authorities in Nebraska seized five outdoor plots containing 541 cannabis plants in 1998, three outdoor plots containing 71 cannabis plants in 1999, and seven outdoor plots containing 396 cannabis plants in 2000. The DCE/SP reported that in 1998 indoor grow operations seized at 14 sites yielded 467 plants, 27 sites yielded 656 plants in 1999, and 18 sites yielded 560 plants in 2000.

Cannabis growers often use concealment methods to disguise cannabis plants in an effort to avoid detection by law enforcement authorities. Cultivators in western Nebraska occasionally intermingle cannabis plants with corn crops. Some growers use the land of unsuspecting farmers and plant cannabis throughout the field to minimize the risk of detection. The WING Task Force reports that cannabis growers often cultivate a hybrid plant that does not grow as tall as

corn plants and, therefore, remains well hidden from landowners and authorities.

Indoor Cannabis Cultivation Operations

In August 2000 Nebraska State Patrol authorities discovered a sophisticated cannabis cultivation operation in the basement of an Omaha home. The operation included three rooms filled with cannabis plants, lights, reflectors, and other equipment.

Source: Nebraska State Patrol.

In June 2000 Washington County law enforcement authorities arrested a woman after discovering a cannabis cultivation operation in a hidden room within her home. A revolving door in the back of her kitchen pantry led to a room containing potted cannabis plants, heat lamps, plant food, and a ventilation system.

Source: Washington County Sheriff's Office.

Transportation

Mexican criminal groups are the primary transporters of wholesale quantities of Mexico-produced marijuana into Nebraska from Mexico, California, and southwestern states. Mexican criminal groups also recruit individuals to transport marijuana to Nebraska from these locations. A common route used to transport marijuana is I-15, which traverses Southern California, Nevada, and the northwestern corner of Arizona, then connects with I-80 in northern Utah.

Local independent dealers and street gangs also transport marijuana to and within the state. For example, law enforcement authorities in Fremont reported that from 1999 through 2000 hundreds of pounds of marijuana were transported by local independent dealers from San Bernardino, California, to Fremont for regional distribution. The Lomas street gang (based in Omaha) transports marijuana from Omaha to Cass County.

Native American independent dealers from the Winnebago and Omaha Reservations transport marijuana from the reservations to South Sioux City. Marijuana also is reportedly transported from Norfolk and Omaha to Wayne.

Marijuana typically is transported to Nebraska in hidden compartments within private and commercial vehicles. Marijuana is concealed in boxes, metal containers, duffel bags, and suitcases, as well as in compartments installed in the side panels, floors, and tailgates of vehicles. In February 2002 the Nebraska State Patrol seized 289 pounds of marijuana concealed in the trunk of a private vehicle west of the North Platte interchange along eastbound I-80. In October 2001 the III Corps Drug Task Force in Fremont investigated a marijuana distribution group that transported marijuana via private vehicle from California and southwestern states to Nebraska in 1-pound,

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machine-sealed aluminum cans. Some of these cans were wrapped in cellophane and covered with a red gel or an oil compound. Machine-sealed cans of the same type also were seized on the Winnebago Reservation.

Marijuana destined for other states often is transported through Nebraska. Transporters frequently travel from California and southwestern states through Nebraska—usually along I-80—en route to destinations in Michigan, Minnesota, and Ohio. In November 2002 the Nebraska State Patrol seized 450 pounds of marijuana from a vehicle on I-80 in Douglas County west of

Omaha. The marijuana reportedly was being transported from Salt Lake City, Utah, to Minneapolis, Minnesota. In May 2002 the Nebraska State Patrol seized over 800 pounds of marijuana in two separate interdictions on I-80. One vehicle en route from Phoenix, Arizona, to Detroit, Michigan, was stopped near Grand Island with 557 pounds of marijuana concealed in eight duffel bags. The second vehicle, traveling from Los Angeles, California, to Toledo, Ohio, was stopped near Lexington with three suitcases containing 244 pounds of marijuana.

Distribution

Mexican criminal groups and, to a lesser extent, Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary wholesale distributors of Mexico-produced marijuana in Nebraska. Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary wholesale distributors of marijuana produced in the state.

Mexican criminal groups, local independent dealers, and street gangs distribute Mexico-produced and locally produced marijuana at the

retail level in Nebraska. Street gangs that distribute marijuana include Bloods, Crips, Lomas 13, and 18th Street in Lincoln; East Side Locos in Grand Island; Gangster Disciple Folks in Fremont; and Florencia in South Sioux City. At the retail level marijuana typically is packaged in sandwich bags and sold at bars, strip clubs, schools, parking lots, residences, businesses, and at concerts.

Other Dangerous Drugs

Some other dangerous drugs (ODDs) pose an increasing threat to Nebraska. ODDs include club drugs such as MDMA and GHB (and its analogs); the hallucinogens LSD, psilocybin, and jimsonweed; and diverted pharmaceuticals such as codeine, diazepam (Valium), hydrocodone (Lortab and Vicodin), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), methadone, morphine, oxycodone (OxyContin,

Percocet, and Percodan), and propoxyphene (Darvocet). Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary distributors of club drugs, which are increasingly available in cities with colleges and universities, and typically are distributed at raves, nightclubs, and bars. Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary distributors of hallucinogens and diverted pharmaceuticals.

Club Drugs

MDMA. Also known as Adam, ecstasy, XTC, E, and X, MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine), is a stimulant and low-level hallucinogen. MDMA is generally taken orally in tablet or capsule form. MDMA abuse is a concern

among law enforcement and public health agencies in the state because the drug can cause psychological problems similar to those associated with methamphetamine and cocaine abuse including confusion, depression, sleeplessness, anxiety,

and paranoia. Physical effects can include muscle tension, involuntary teeth clenching, blurred vision, and increased heart rate and blood pressure. MDMA abuse can also cause a marked increase in body temperature leading to muscle breakdown, kidney failure, cardiovascular system failure, stroke, seizure, or heart attack as reported in some fatal cases at raves. Researchers suggest that MDMA abuse may result in long-term and sometimes permanent damage to parts of the brain that are critical to thought and memory.

The increasing availability and abuse of MDMA, particularly among teenagers and young adults, pose a growing threat to Nebraska. Law enforcement respondents to the NDTs 2002 in Kearney reported high levels of availability and abuse of MDMA, while officials in Chadron and Omaha reported moderate levels of availability and abuse. The Lincoln and Omaha Police Departments report that MDMA is popular with college students. Typical MDMA users are Caucasian individuals in their late teens or early twenties.

Most MDMA available in Nebraska is produced outside the United States, typically in the Netherlands and Belgium. It is transported by couriers aboard commercial aircraft through distribution centers such as Chicago, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City, Phoenix, and Washington, D.C., and via package delivery services. Additionally, law enforcement agencies in Nebraska report that local independent dealers transport MDMA using private vehicles and passenger trains. Lincoln law enforcement authorities report that MDMA sold in their jurisdiction is transported from Kansas City and Omaha. For example, in December 2001 Omaha Police Department authorities seized 5,000 MDMA tablets from a 23-year-old male in a private vehicle traveling along I-80. In October 2001 the Nebraska State Patrol seized over 1,700 MDMA tablets, which were vacuum-packaged in plastic bags, from a sleeper compartment on a passenger train in Omaha.

Caucasian local independent dealers dominate the distribution of MDMA at the wholesale and retail levels in Nebraska. However, in 2001 the WING Task Force purchased MDMA from male

Raves

Throughout the 1990s high energy, all-night dances known as raves, which feature hard-pounding techno-music and flashing laser lights, increased in popularity among teens and young adults. Raves occur in most metropolitan areas of the country. They can be either permanent dance clubs or temporary "weekend event" sites set up in abandoned warehouses, open fields, empty buildings, or civic centers. Club drugs are a group of synthetic drugs often sold at raves and dance clubs. MDMA is one of the most popular club drugs. Rave managers often sell water, pacifiers, and glow sticks at rave parties. "Ravers" require water to offset dehydration caused by MDMA, use pacifiers to prevent the grinding of teeth—a common side effect of MDMA use—and wave glow sticks in front of their eyes because MDMA stimulates light perception.

Hispanic distributors. Caucasian independent distributors sell MDMA at rave parties, nightclubs, and college campuses in the state. Raves are increasingly popular in Nebraska, particularly in Bellevue, Omaha, and the panhandle area. During November and December 2001 the Nebraska State Patrol seized a total of 2,000 MDMA tablets. MDMA tablets generally sell for \$25 to \$30 each in Nebraska.

GHB and Analogs. Also known as liquid ecstasy, grievous bodily harm, and Georgia home boy, GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) and its analogs—GBL, BD, GHV, and GVL—pose a low threat to Nebraska. (See text box on page 20.) GHB, an illicit drug known for its euphoric, sedative, and anabolic effects, is colorless and odorless, and its effects include drowsiness, sedation, loss of consciousness, and anterograde amnesia.

GHB analogs are drugs that possess chemical structures that closely resemble GHB. Both GBL and BD convert into GHB in the body. The analog GBL is widely available as a powder and liquid at gyms, fitness centers, and some health food stores. The analog BD is a central nervous system depressant that can be produced in clear liquid, white powder, and pill and capsule forms. GHB

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and its analogs often are administered to intended victims of sexual assault. These drugs are difficult to detect in drug abusers or victims of sexual assaults because the chemicals are quickly metabolized in the body.

GHB Analogs	
Analog	Chemical/Alternative Name
GBL	gamma-butyrolactone furanone di-hydro dihydrofuranone
BD	1,4-butanediol tetramethylene glycol sucol-B butylene glycol
GVL	gamma-valerolactone 4-pentanolide
GHV	gamma-hydroxyvalerate methyl-GHB

The availability and abuse of GHB and its analogs in Nebraska pose a minimal threat. In 2001 Sarpy County law enforcement authorities seized GHB during an investigation of bodybuilders who were distributing steroids and marijuana. They

also investigated one sexual assault allegation in which the victim may have been drugged with GHB. Omaha law enforcement agencies believe that some of the GHB available in the area is synthesized locally and the remainder is transported from Arizona and California. Late in 1999 task force officers in Blair discovered a GHB laboratory for which the suspect had ordered precursor chemicals over the Internet. Young Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary distributors. GHB and its analogs are available in Nebraska primarily at social venues such as bars, nightclubs, raves, and on high school and college campuses. GHB analogs also are available at some disreputable health food stores, gyms, and via the Internet.

Liquid GHB Seized

In September 2001 Nebraska State Patrol officers seized three 1-gallon jugs containing liquid GHB during a routine traffic stop along I-80. The jugs were concealed in the cargo area of a vehicle. Two pounds of crystal methamphetamine also were seized.

Source: Nebraska State Patrol.

Hallucinogens

LSD. The distribution and abuse of LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) is an emerging threat to Nebraska. Also known as acid, boomers, and yellow sunshine, LSD is a hallucinogen that induces abnormalities in sensory perceptions. The effects of LSD are unpredictable and depend on the amount taken, the environment in which it is used, and the user's personality, mood, and expectations. Abusers may feel the effects for up to 12 hours. The physical effects include dilated pupils, higher body temperature, increased heart rate and blood pressure, sweating, loss of appetite, nausea, numbness, weakness, insomnia, dry mouth, and tremors. Two long-term disorders associated with LSD are persistent psychosis and

hallucinogen persisting perception disorder (flashbacks). LSD typically is ingested orally.

Little is known about the wholesale distribution of LSD in Nebraska. However, in 2002 an LSD distributor in Lincoln exchanged 10,000 "hits" of LSD for a pound quantity of methamphetamine from a distributor in McCook. Retail distributors typically are Caucasian local independent dealers who sell LSD at colleges and concerts. Occasionally, law enforcement authorities encounter Hispanic LSD distributors. High school and college-age individuals are the primary abusers in the state. LSD is available in large cities and college towns in Nebraska. In response to the NDTs 2002, authorities in Fremont as well as in Dodge and Douglas Counties

reported that LSD availability was at high levels in their jurisdictions. LSD is available in powder and liquid forms, in tablets or capsules, on pieces of blotter paper that absorb the drug, and on small candies. Blotter paper laced with LSD is sold in the panhandle area. Some abusers hide liquid LSD in bottles designed to hold eyedrops. The DEA Omaha District Office reports that LSD sells for \$2 to \$4 per dose.

Psilocybin. The distribution and abuse of psilocybin pose a low threat to Nebraska. Psilocybin is the primary psychoactive ingredient in psilocybin mushrooms. Known as *teonanacatl*, or divine flesh, by the Aztecs, this mushroom is consumed dried or as a white powder. Taken in non-toxic doses, psilocybin produces changes in perception, thought, and mood. Effects last for approximately 6 hours.

Typical abusers are Caucasian high school and college age individuals. In Nebraska psilocybin mushrooms are sold around colleges or universities and at concerts. Distributors, typically from southwestern states, transport mushrooms to Nebraska using package delivery services and private vehicles. In November 2001 the Nebraska State Patrol seized 136 jars of psilocybin mushrooms concealed in boxes from a woman traveling in a rental truck on I-80.

Jimsonweed. The abuse of jimsonweed (*Datura stramonium*) appears to be an emerging

problem in the state. Jimsonweed grows wild throughout Nebraska. When jimsonweed seeds, which contain alkaloids, are ingested, they affect the digestive process, elevate body temperature, increase pulse rate, cause dry mouth, and produce a hallucinogenic effect.

The number of jimsonweed poisonings has increased in Nebraska. According to The Poison Center at Children's Hospital, there were 10 jimsonweed poisonings in 2000 compared with 4 in 1999. These accounted for almost 3 percent of all jimsonweed poisonings reported nationally in 2000. Law enforcement authorities in Scottsbluff as well as Stanton and Washington Counties reported jimsonweed seed poisonings in 2000. Madison County officials reported a jimsonweed poisoning in January 2001. In this incident after ingesting 25 jimsonweed seeds, an 18-year-old honor student crashed her car and walked away from the accident. She suffered from hyperthermia, one of the effects of jimsonweed. She later became unconscious and died of exposure.

Police and prosecutors can do little to stop the proliferation of jimsonweed abuse because it is not a crime to possess and consume the seeds of the plant. In January 2001 Madison County authorities did, however, charge a man with felony child abuse for allegedly selling jimsonweed seeds to a 15-year-old boy.

Diverted Pharmaceuticals

Diverted pharmaceuticals pose a low but increasing threat to Nebraska. Among the pharmaceuticals most commonly abused are hydrocodone products (Lortab and Vicodin). Other pharmaceuticals frequently abused in Nebraska include codeine, diazepam (Valium), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), methadone, morphine, oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet, and Percodan), and propoxyphene (Darvocet).

The primary sources of diverted pharmaceuticals are pharmacies and medical practitioners. Unscrupulous medical professionals either steal the drugs or commit prescription fraud by selling prescriptions. In a process known as doctor shopping, abusers visit several doctors to obtain multiple prescriptions. Individuals also alter prescriptions or call pharmacies with false prescription refills. Law enforcement officials in Omaha indicate that it is not uncommon for drug

distributors to trade drugs. In 2000 members of the Nebraska State Patrol and the U.S. Postal Inspection Service investigated a case in which an

Omaha man mailed pounds of marijuana to a suspect in Jupiter, Florida, and received hydrocodone in exchange for the marijuana.

Heroin

Heroin poses a low threat to Nebraska. The availability and abuse of heroin are decreasing in most areas of the state; however, Mexican black tar heroin and brown powdered heroin are available in some areas. No single group dominates the transportation or distribution of heroin in

Nebraska; both Mexican criminal groups and Caucasian local independent dealers transport the drug into the state. Wholesale distribution rarely occurs in Nebraska. At the retail level, Mexican criminal groups, local independent dealers, and street gangs distribute heroin.

Abuse

Law enforcement officials in Nebraska report that heroin abuse is low. According to responses to the NDIC National Drug Threat Survey 2002, all 13 Nebraska respondents who reported on heroin abuse in their jurisdictions indicated that abuse was at a low level.

Heroin-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities in Nebraska—already at a low level—decreased from 1997 through 2001. TEDS data indicate that heroin-related treatment admissions decreased from 40 in 1997 to 11 in 2001, providing further evidence that abuse of the drug remains low in the state. (See Table 1 on page 3.)

Heroin abuse has been a factor in a limited number of drug-related deaths in the Omaha metropolitan area. According to DAWN mortality data, the number of heroin-related deaths in the Omaha metropolitan area has remained low; three deaths were reported in 1997, three in 1998, two in 1999, two in 2000, and seven in 2001.

Heroin is not frequently detected among male arrestees in Omaha. ADAM data for Omaha indicate that only 2 percent of adult male arrestees in 2000 tested positive for heroin. Less than 4 percent of Caucasian male arrestees and less than 1 percent of African American male arrestees tested positive for heroin.

Availability

Mexico-produced heroin is available on a limited basis in Nebraska. However, the availability of heroin is decreasing in most areas of the state. Mexican black tar heroin is available in limited quantities in Hastings, Lincoln, and Omaha, and Mexican brown powdered heroin is available in limited quantities in Columbus, Lincoln, and South Sioux City. Other types of heroin typically are not available in Nebraska.

The amount of heroin seized in Nebraska has been low over the past several years. Federal law enforcement agencies in Nebraska seized only 0.1

kilogram of heroin from 1998 through 2001, according to FDSS data. (See Table 3 on page 7.) In 2001 the Nebraska State Patrol seized 15 grams of heroin. State and local law enforcement agencies in Omaha made four seizures of Mexican black tar heroin totaling 610 grams during 1999 and seized 30 grams in 2000.

The percentage of drug-related federal sentences that were heroin-related in Nebraska was less than the national percentage in FY2001. According to USSC data, in FY2001 less than 1 percent of federal sentences were heroin-related in

Nebraska compared with 7 percent nationally. (See Table 2 on page 4.) The number of federal sentences resulting from heroin violations in Nebraska decreased from 12 in FY1997 to 1 in FY2001.

Heroin prices in Nebraska vary depending on the area. Mexican black tar heroin is sold in “beans” for \$50 each. Beans are quantities of less than one-quarter gram that are wrapped in strips cut from a balloon.

Violence

In Nebraska heroin-related violence is limited. According to ADAM reporting, 2 percent of adult males arrested for violent offenses in Omaha tested positive for heroin in 2000. Although many

violent offenders do not abuse heroin, some heroin distributors, particularly street gang members, are responsible for many violent crimes.

Production

Opium is not cultivated nor is heroin produced in Nebraska. Heroin is produced primarily in four source regions—South America, Southeast Asia,

Southwest Asia, and Mexico. Most of the heroin available in Nebraska is produced in Mexico.

Transportation

No one group dominates the transportation of heroin into Nebraska. Mexican criminal groups transport small quantities of heroin into Nebraska via the highway system. Caucasian

local independent dealers also transport heroin into Nebraska. Most of the heroin available in Nebraska is transported from Mexico and El Paso, Texas.

Distribution

Wholesale quantities of heroin generally are not available in Nebraska. Most heroin distribution primarily occurs at the retail level. Mexican criminal groups, local independent dealers, and street gangs are the primary retail distributors of heroin in the state. Due to the limited demand for heroin in Nebraska, these retail dealers also distribute other illicit drugs. Mexican criminal groups in Columbus, Caucasian independent dealers in Lincoln, and Mexican criminal groups and African American independent dealers in Omaha

distribute heroin at the retail level. Law enforcement officials in South Sioux City report that Caucasian local independent dealers distribute heroin at the retail level in their jurisdiction. In 1999 the Omaha Police Department and Douglas County Sheriff’s Office identified a Mexican criminal group that distributed heroin. The Omaha Police Department also identified a small heroin distribution group in 1999 that allegedly obtained Mexican black tar heroin from Sioux City, Iowa.

Outlook

Methamphetamine will remain a primary drug threat to Nebraska. The availability of methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states will increase as Mexican criminal groups expand their wholesale distribution operations in Nebraska. The availability of locally produced methamphetamine will likely increase due to the ease of obtaining anhydrous ammonia. As a consequence, methamphetamine-related environmental problems will persist throughout the state.

Crack cocaine abuse will continue at higher levels than powdered cocaine abuse in Nebraska. Crack cocaine represents the greatest threat to inner-city neighborhoods, and violent crime associated with the distribution and abuse of crack will continue to be a concern in Nebraska. Street gangs in metropolitan areas will continue to dominate the retail distribution of crack cocaine. Powdered cocaine will remain available in sufficient quantities to meet user demand.

Marijuana will continue as the primary drug of abuse in Nebraska. Mexico-produced marijuana

will continue to be the most prevalent type available, but locally produced marijuana from indoor cultivation will become increasingly available. Mexican criminal groups will remain the primary transporters of Mexico-produced marijuana into Nebraska. Caucasian local independent dealers will continue their cultivation of cannabis in the state as well as distribution of the marijuana they produce.

The popularity of some other dangerous drugs, especially MDMA, is likely to increase among teenagers and young adults. The demand for MDMA and LSD may expand, particularly among teenagers and young adults, as the number of rave parties increases throughout the state. The demand for diverted pharmaceuticals also is likely to increase.

Heroin abuse will remain at low levels compared with the abuse of other illicit drugs in Nebraska. Heroin availability and abuse will likely remain limited to metropolitan areas.

Sources

State and Regional

Alliance Police Department
Beatrice Police Department
Bellevue Police Department
Cass County Sheriff's Office
Chadron Police Department
Children's Hospital
 The Poison Center
Columbus Police Department
Dodge County Sheriff's Office
Douglas County Sheriff's Office
Fremont Police Department
 III Corps Drug Task Force
Grand Island Police Department
Hastings Police Department
Kearney Police Department
Kimball Police Department
Lancaster County Sheriff's Office
Lincoln Police Department
McCook Police Department
North Platte Police Department
Omaha Metro Task Force
Omaha Police Department
Omaha World-Herald
Otoe County Sheriff's Office

Nebraska Drug Threat Assessment

Platte County Sheriff's Office

Plattsmouth Police Department

Red Willow County Sheriff's Office

Sarpy County Sheriff's Office

Saunders County Sheriff's Office

Scottsbluff Police Department

Seward County Sheriff's Office

Sidney Police Department

State of Iowa

South Sioux City Police Department

State of Nebraska

Department of Health and Human Services

State Patrol

Troop A

Troop B

Drug Division

Tri-City Drug Task Force

Valentine Police Department

Washington County Sheriff's Office

Wayne Police Department

West Point Police Department

Western Intelligence and Narcotics Group (WING) Task Force

York Police Department

National

Executive Office of the President

Office of National Drug Control Policy

High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area

Midwest

U.S. Department of Commerce

U.S. Census Bureau

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

Youth Risk Behavior Survey

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration

Office of Applied Studies

Drug Abuse Warning Network

National Household Survey on Drug Abuse

Treatment Episode Data Set

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

Directorate of Border and Transportation Security

Bureau of Citizenship and Immigration Services (formerly Immigration and Naturalization Services)

U.S. Department of Justice

Criminal Division

Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force

Drug Enforcement Administration

Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program

El Paso Intelligence Center

Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System

Operation Jetway

Operation Pipeline

Federal-wide Drug Seizure System

St. Louis Division

Omaha District Office

Federal Bureau of Investigation

National Institute of Justice

Office of Justice Programs

Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program

U.S. Attorney's Office

District of Nebraska

U.S. Sentencing Commission

Other

Associated Press

Columbia University

National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse

University of Mississippi

Marijuana Potency Monitoring Program

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