



Drugs and Crime

City Profile

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U. S. D E P A R T M E N T O F J U S T I C E



NDIC

Denver, Colorado

Fast Facts

Population	554,636 residents Caucasian 51.9%, Hispanic 31.7% African American 11.1%, Asian 2.8% Native American 1.3%, Other 1.2% 121,968 residents under 18 years of age
Land area	154 square miles
Police districts	6
Interstate highways	25, 70, and 76
International airports	Denver International Airport
Rail service	Passenger: Amtrak Freight: Colorado Kansas & Pacific Railway Company Colorado & Wyoming Railway Company Denver Rock Island Railroad
Mayor	Wellington E. Webb
Police Chief	Gerald Whitman

Overview

Cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine pose the most significant drug threats to Denver. Marijuana also poses a serious threat. Other dangerous drugs such as MDMA and diverted pharmaceuticals also are available and abused.

Most of the cocaine and heroin available in Denver is transported from Mexico or from trans-shipment points in Arizona, California, New Mexico, and Texas via private and commercial vehicles. These drugs also are transported into the city by couriers aboard commercial aircraft and buses and via package delivery services. Much of the methamphetamine and marijuana available in Denver is transported directly from Mexico or from source areas in California and southwestern states. Some marijuana available in Denver also is transported from production areas in Canada. Methamphetamine and marijuana also are produced in Colorado. MDMA typically is transported into Denver from domestic distribution centers, primarily New York, Las Vegas, and Los Angeles by couriers aboard commercial aircraft and by package delivery services.

Diverted pharmaceuticals generally are obtained through diversion techniques including prescription fraud, prescription forgery, and “doctor shopping.”

Drug transporters primarily use Interstates 25, 70, and 76 and U.S. Highways 36 and 85 to transport drugs into and through Denver. Interstates 25 and 70 intersect in Denver and are frequently traveled by Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs). These two interstates provide access to many other U.S. states: I-25 extends from near the U.S.–Mexico border to Montana, and I-70 extends from Utah to Maryland. Interstate 76 in eastern Colorado connects I-70 with I-80 in Nebraska and is used by individuals transporting drugs eastward from Denver. US 85, which connects Denver and Greeley with Cheyenne, Wyoming, and US 36 between Denver and Boulder frequently are used by criminal groups to transport illicit drugs between drug markets. Law enforcement officials in Colorado commonly seize drugs on interstate highways, often as part of Operation Pipeline initiatives.

Mexican DTOs and criminal groups are deeply entrenched in Denver’s illicit drug trade. For example, Mexican DTOs and criminal groups control the transportation and wholesale distribution of powdered cocaine in Denver. Mexican criminal groups and local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of powdered cocaine, and street gangs such as Sureños 13, Gangster Disciples, Bloods, and Crips and local independent dealers distribute crack cocaine at the retail level. Mexican criminal groups control the transportation and wholesale distribution of most methamphetamine in the Denver area; these groups typically sell cocaine in addition to methamphetamine. Mexican criminal groups and Mexican and Caucasian local independent dealers distribute most of the methamphetamine available at the retail level in Denver.

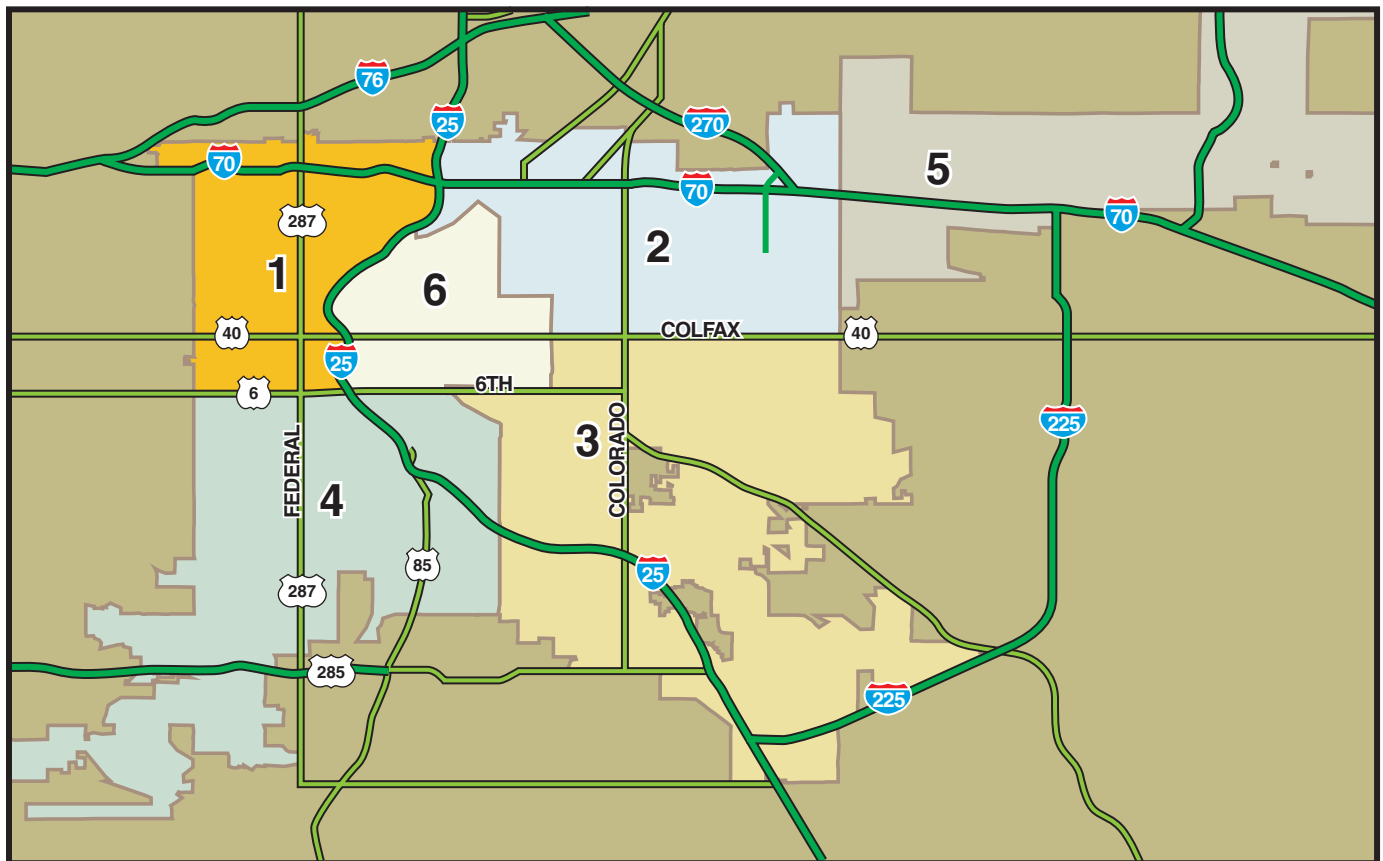
Mexican DTOs control the transportation and wholesale distribution of heroin in Denver and supply heroin to Mexican criminal groups and local independent dealers for retail sale. Hispanic

gangs such as Sureños 13 also distribute heroin at the retail level. Mexican DTOs and criminal groups also control the transportation and wholesale distribution of Mexico-produced marijuana in Denver. These DTOs and criminal groups supply Mexico-produced marijuana to Mexican and Caucasian criminal groups, street gangs, and local independent dealers for retail distribution.

Sureños 13

Sureños 13 is an affiliation of Hispanic street gangs influenced by the Mexican Mafia prison gang. Sureños gang members’ main source of income is the retail-level distribution of cocaine, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine both within the jail and prison systems and in the community at large, as well as through extortion of drug distributors on the streets. Some members have direct links to Mexican DTOs and broker deals for the Mexican Mafia as well as their own gang. Sureños gangs also are involved in various other criminal activities such as assault, carjacking, home invasion, robbery, and homicide.

Caucasian criminal groups dominate the transportation and distribution of Canada-produced marijuana in Denver. Caucasian criminal groups also are the primary transporters and wholesale distributors of MDMA, supplying local independent dealers with the drug for retail distribution. Asian street gangs, particularly Asian Pride and Viet Pride, increasingly distribute MDMA at the wholesale level. Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary distributors of other dangerous drugs including GHB and diverted pharmaceuticals. The Denver Police Department reports that illicit drugs are distributed from more than 100 open-air drug markets within the city’s six police districts.



Denver police districts.

Drug Abuse Indicators

Illicit drugs are frequently abused in Denver. According to the Colorado Department of Human Services Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division (ADAD), the total number of illicit drug-related admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities in Denver increased 4 percent from 1,871 in 2001 to 1,949 in 2002. However, Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) data indicate that the total number of drug-related emergency department (ED) mentions in the Denver metropolitan area decreased 7 percent from 9,412 in 2001 to 8,745 in 2002 and are the third lowest among all DAWN areas nationwide. In addition, the rate of drug-related ED mentions per 100,000 population in the Denver metropolitan area (444) was lower than the rate nationwide (471) in 2002. Mortality data from DAWN indicate that there were 310 drug-related deaths in the Denver metropolitan area (Adams, Arapahoe, Denver, Douglas, and Jefferson Counties) in 2002, of which 226 deaths were drug-induced (overdoses). During that period 147 deaths occurred in Denver County alone; 101 were drug-induced. Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring

(ADAM) program data indicate that 62 percent of adult male arrestees in Denver tested positive for abusing at least one illicit substance in 2001.

Cocaine

The distribution and abuse of cocaine, both powdered and crack, and associated violence pose the principal drug threat to Denver. Powdered cocaine is abused throughout the greater metropolitan area, and crack cocaine is abused primarily in northeastern Denver and in Aurora, just outside Denver.

Treatment data indicate that cocaine, particularly crack, commonly is abused in Denver. According to ADAD, the number of cocaine-related admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities in Denver increased 7 percent from 501 in 2001 to 538 in 2002. In more than 69 percent of these admissions, smoking (crack cocaine) was the primary method of administration in 2002. DAWN data indicate that cocaine ED mentions in the Denver metropolitan area increased 20 percent from 1,343 in 2001 to 1,613 in 2002; in 2002 there were more ED mentions related

to cocaine than any other illicit drug. The rate of cocaine ED mentions per 100,000 population in the Denver metropolitan area in 2002 (82) was higher than the rate nationwide (78). Mortality data from DAWN indicate that there were 126 cocaine-related deaths in the Denver metropolitan area in 2001. In that year cocaine was implicated in more single-drug deaths (41) in the Denver metropolitan area than any other illicit drug. ADAM program data indicate that 34 percent of adult male arrestees in Denver tested positive for cocaine in 2001.

Cocaine is readily available in Denver. According to U.S. Sentencing Commission (USSC) data, in fiscal year (FY) 2001 powdered and crack cocaine-related sentences accounted for 51 percent of the federal drug sentences in Colorado; this percentage was higher than the national percentage (43%). The Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Denver Division and the Denver Police Department reported that powdered cocaine in Denver sold for \$16,000 to \$22,000 per kilogram, \$500 to \$1,000 per ounce, and \$50 to \$100 per gram in the fourth quarter of FY2003, while crack cocaine sold for \$650 to \$1,000 per ounce, \$50 to \$100 per gram, and \$10 to \$40 per rock. During the same period, the Denver Police Department reported that the purity of powdered cocaine ranged from 20 to 30 percent for gram quantities and 60 to 86 percent for multiounce, pound, and kilogram quantities. The purity of crack cocaine ranged from 35 to 50 percent.

Cocaine is the drug most often associated with violent crime in Denver. Law enforcement officials in Denver report that the number of gang-related violent crimes such as assault, carjacking, drive-by shooting, and homicide has increased as street gangs who distribute cocaine protect their drug operations and attempt to collect drug debts. Cocaine abusers also are prone to violence, but to a lesser extent than methamphetamine abusers.

Denver serves as a regional transportation hub for wholesale quantities of powdered cocaine. Mexican DTOs and criminal groups from Mexico as well as from California and southwestern states transport most of the cocaine available in Denver

in private and commercial vehicles. Powdered cocaine routinely is transported from Denver to markets in Colorado, Kansas, Montana, Nebraska, Nevada, North Dakota, South Dakota, Wyoming, and other states in private vehicles on interstate, U.S., and state highways. Most of the crack cocaine available in the area is converted locally from powdered cocaine, although some crack cocaine is transported into Denver from Chicago and Los Angeles.

Mexican DTOs and criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine and Mexican criminal groups and local independent dealers dominate the retail distribution of the drug in Denver. Street gangs such as Sureños 13, Gallant Knights Insane, North Side Mafia, Gangster Disciples, Bloods, and Crips and local independent dealers are the principal retail distributors of crack cocaine in Denver. According to the Denver Police Department, crack cocaine is distributed from more than 60 open-air drug markets in all six districts, while powdered cocaine is distributed from 50 open-air drug markets in Districts 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6.

Heroin

Heroin also poses a significant drug threat to Denver, particularly to the city's suburbs where the availability and abuse of the drug are high. According to ADAD, in Denver there were more admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities for heroin abuse than for abuse of any other illicit drug from 1999 to 2001. However, heroin became the second most abused drug after cocaine when the number of heroin-related admissions in Denver decreased 7 percent from 561 in 2001 to 520 in 2002. ADAD data indicate that 83 percent of all individuals admitted for heroin-related treatment identified injection and 12 percent identified smoking as the primary method of administration during the first half of 2002. DAWN data indicate that heroin ED mentions in the Denver metropolitan area increased 11 percent from 769 in 2001 to 855 in 2002. In addition, the rate of heroin ED mentions per 100,000 population in the Denver metropolitan area (43) was higher than the rate nationwide (36) in 2002. DAWN mortality data indicate that there were

77 heroin/morphine-related deaths in the Denver metropolitan area in 2001. ADAM program data indicate that 5 percent of adult male arrestees in Denver tested positive for abusing opiates in 2001.

Mexican black tar heroin and, to a lesser extent, Mexican brown powdered heroin increasingly are available in Denver. South American heroin and Southeast Asian heroin are available to a very limited extent. According to USSC data, in FY2001 heroin-related sentences accounted for 4 percent of the federal drug sentences in Colorado; this percentage was lower than the national percentage (7%). The DEA Denver Division and the Denver Police Department reported that heroin sold for \$1,100 to \$1,700 per ounce, \$75 to \$300 per gram, and \$40 per one-quarter gram in the fourth quarter of FY2003.

Heroin generally is not associated with violence in Denver; however, some distributors, particularly street gangs, may commit violent crimes to protect their operations. According to Denver law enforcement officials, street gangs such as Sureños 13 distribute heroin and commit violent crimes such as assault, auto theft, drive-by shooting, and homicide, some of which are related to their heroin distribution activities. In addition, heroin abusers sometimes commit property crimes to acquire funds to purchase the drug.

Denver serves as a regional transportation hub for heroin. Mexican DTOs are the primary transporters of heroin into Denver. Most of the heroin available in Denver is transported into the city in private vehicles or by couriers aboard commercial aircraft, buses, and trains traveling from Mexico and from major domestic distribution centers such as Los Angeles and ports of entry (POEs) including El Paso, Phoenix, and San Diego. Package delivery services also are used to transport heroin into the city. Mexican criminal groups transport the drug from Denver to markets in Colorado, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, and other nearby states in private vehicles on interstate, U.S., and state highways.

Largest Heroin Seizures

From November 14 to 17, 2003, DEA and the Denver Police Department recorded the largest heroin seizures in Colorado history. Law enforcement officials seized a total of more than 11 pounds of Mexican black tar and brown powdered heroin and arrested two male Mexican nationals in two separate investigations. According to DEA, the defendants sold the drug to the undercover officers in ounce and multiounce quantities with a purity that ranged from 60 to 70 percent. Law enforcement officials reported that undercover officers purchased more than 3 pounds of the drug from the defendants during the course of the investigations.

Source: Drug Enforcement Administration.

Mexican DTOs are the primary wholesale distributors of Mexican black tar and Mexican brown powdered heroin in Denver. Mexican criminal groups and local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of Mexican black tar and brown powdered heroin in the city. Hispanic gangs such as Sureños 13 also distribute heroin at the retail level. Teenagers and young adults frequently drive to Denver from the surrounding suburbs to purchase heroin for their own use and to distribute to friends and associates. According to the Denver Police Department, heroin is distributed from 48 open-air drug markets in Districts 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6.

Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine poses a threat to Denver. The drug is produced and distributed in Denver and its surrounding suburbs. Methamphetamine is available and abused in the metropolitan area while cocaine remains the stimulant of choice. According to the Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), the number of methamphetamine laboratories seized in Colorado increased more than 47 percent from 314 in 2001 to 464 in 2002. During 2002, 16 methamphetamine laboratories were seized in Denver, and an additional 131 were seized in contiguous Adams, Arapahoe, Douglas, and Jefferson Counties. Most

laboratories seized by law enforcement in Colorado use the red phosphorus/ephedrine reduction method to produce methamphetamine. However, the theft of anhydrous ammonia and the seizure of laboratories utilizing the Birch reduction method are increasingly common in Denver's suburbs.

Treatment data also indicate that methamphetamine frequently is abused in Denver, although ADAD reported that the number of methamphetamine-related admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities in Denver decreased 15 percent from 181 in 2001 to 153 in 2002. DAWN data indicate that methamphetamine ED mentions in the Denver metropolitan area remained relatively stable at 98 in 2001 and 99 in 2002. Similarly, the rate of methamphetamine ED mentions per 100,000 population remained unchanged—5 in 2001 and 5 in 2002—and was lower than the nationwide rate in 2002 (7). DAWN mortality data indicate that there were 19 methamphetamine-related deaths in the Denver metropolitan area in 2001. ADAM program data indicate that 3 percent of adult male arrestees in Denver tested positive for methamphetamine in 2001. During the first half of 2002, 31 percent of methamphetamine-related admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities in Denver reported injection as the primary method of administration, while 52 percent reported smoking as the primary method of administration.

Methamphetamine is available in Denver. According to USSC data, in FY2001 methamphetamine-related sentences accounted for 31 percent of the federal drug sentences in Colorado; this percentage was higher than the national percentage (14%). In Denver, methamphetamine sold for \$4,000 to \$7,500 per pound, \$700 to \$1,100 per ounce, and \$80 to \$125 per gram in the fourth quarter of FY2003, according to the DEA Denver Division. During the same period, crystal methamphetamine, commonly called ice or glass, sold for \$14,000 to \$24,000 per pound and \$900 to \$1,500 per ounce, according to the Rocky Mountain HIDTA. DEA reported that the purity of tested samples of methamphetamine in FY2003 ranged from 12 to 20 percent.

What is Crystal Methamphetamine?

Crystal methamphetamine is a colorless, odorless form of d-methamphetamine, a powerful and highly addictive synthetic stimulant. Crystal methamphetamine typically resembles small fragments of glass or shiny blue-white "rocks" of various sizes. Like powdered methamphetamine (another form of d-methamphetamine), crystal methamphetamine is abused because of the long-lasting euphoric effects it produces. Crystal methamphetamine, however, typically has a higher purity level and may produce even longer-lasting and more intense physiological effects than the powdered form of the drug. The most common names for crystal methamphetamine are ice and glass.

Law enforcement authorities in Denver state that methamphetamine is a growing threat and report a direct correlation between methamphetamine distribution and violence. Criminal groups and local independent dealers who distribute methamphetamine often engage in violent acts including assault and homicide to protect drug distribution and production activities and to collect drug debts. Methamphetamine abusers are prone to violence and often are paranoid and delusional, frequently arming themselves against perceived threats, particularly from law enforcement officers.

Mexican criminal groups from Mexico as well as from Arizona, California, and Texas transport most of the methamphetamine available in Denver in private and commercial vehicles. El Paso, Phoenix, San Diego, and Yuma are significant POEs for methamphetamine that subsequently is transported to Denver. Denver also serves as a regional transportation hub for wholesale quantities of methamphetamine. Mexican criminal groups and local independent dealers transport much of the drug from Denver to markets in Colorado, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, and other nearby states in private vehicles on interstate, U.S., and state highways.

Large Methamphetamine Seizure

On November 25, 2003, the Denver Police Department seized 5 kilograms of suspected Mexico-produced methamphetamine from a motel room and arrested two male Mexican nationals. Five 1-kilogram, cellophane-sealed packages of methamphetamine were discovered inside a portable stereo in their motel room.

Source: Denver Police Department.

Mexican criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of methamphetamine in Denver. These groups typically sell cocaine in addition to methamphetamine. Mexican criminal groups and Mexican and Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary distributors of methamphetamine at the retail level in Denver. Since the first half of FY2002, the DEA Denver Division has observed an increase in the number of Caucasian criminal groups distributing methamphetamine supplied by Mexican wholesale distributors. According to the Denver Police Department, methamphetamine is distributed from 13 open-air drug markets in Districts 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6.

Marijuana

Marijuana is widely available and abused in Denver. According to ADAD, the number of marijuana-related admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities in Denver increased 14 percent from 504 in 2001 to 577 in 2002. However, DAWN data indicate that the number of marijuana ED mentions in the Denver metropolitan area decreased 24 percent from 979 in 2001 to 742 in 2002. The rate of marijuana ED mentions per 100,000 population in the Denver metropolitan area in 2002 (38) was lower than the rate nationwide (47). ADAM program data indicate that 40 percent of adult male arrestees in Denver tested positive for marijuana abuse in 2001.

According to USSC data, in FY2001 marijuana-related sentences accounted for 13 percent of the federal drug sentences in Colorado; this was lower than the national percentage (33%). The DEA Denver Division and the Denver Police Department reported that commercial-grade marijuana

produced by Mexican criminal groups in Mexico as well as in California and other southwestern states sold for \$400 to \$1,000 per pound, \$50 to \$80 per ounce, and \$5 per bag in Denver in the fourth quarter of FY2003, while high-grade marijuana, primarily produced in Oregon, Washington, and Canada, sold for \$2,000 to \$4,500 per pound and \$600 per ounce. During the same period, the DEA Denver Division reported that locally produced high-grade marijuana sold for \$1,500 to \$4,000 per pound and \$200 to \$500 per ounce.

The distribution of marijuana occasionally is linked to violent crime in Denver. According to Denver law enforcement officials, street gangs that distribute marijuana commit violent crimes such as assault, auto theft, drive-by shooting, and homicide, some of which are related to their marijuana distribution activities.

Mexico-produced marijuana generally is transported into Denver from Mexico as well as from California and southwestern states in private and commercial vehicles. Mexican DTOs and criminal groups control the transportation and wholesale distribution of Mexico-produced marijuana in Denver. El Paso, Phoenix, and San Diego are significant POEs for marijuana that is transported into Denver. Canada-produced marijuana is transported from Canada or transshipment points in Washington in private vehicles and aircraft. Caucasian criminal groups are the primary transporters of Canada-produced marijuana. Denver serves as a regional transportation hub for wholesale quantities of Mexico- and Canada-produced marijuana. Mexico- and Canada-produced marijuana routinely is transported from Denver to markets in Colorado, Montana, Utah, Wyoming, and other nearby states in private vehicles on interstate, U.S., and state highways.

Mexican and Caucasian criminal groups, African American, Asian, and Hispanic street gangs as well as local independent dealers distribute Mexico-produced marijuana at the retail level. Caucasian criminal groups dominate the wholesale and retail distribution of Canada-produced marijuana. Local independent dealers also distribute Canada-produced marijuana

at the retail level. Some local independent dealers cultivate limited quantities of cannabis in the Denver metropolitan area, primarily in the western and southern suburbs. These dealers also serve as the primary retail distributors of locally produced marijuana. According to the Denver Police Department, marijuana is distributed from 31 open-air drug markets in Districts 1, 2, 4, 5, and 6.

Other Dangerous Drugs

Other dangerous drugs (ODDs) pose a threat to Denver. ODDs include the club drugs MDMA, GHB and its analogs, and LSD and diverted pharmaceuticals. In 2002, there were 7 admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities in Denver for hallucinogen (LSD and PCP) abuse, up from 4 in 2001, and 22 admissions for sedative abuse in 2002, up from 10 in 2001, according to ADAD. DAWN data indicate that in the Denver metropolitan area there were 33 MDMA ED mentions, 15 GHB mentions, and 5 LSD mentions in 2002. DAWN mortality data indicate that 4 deaths in the Denver metropolitan area in 2001 were related to the abuse of club drugs and 221 deaths were related to the abuse of diverted pharmaceuticals including analgesics, narcotic analgesics, benzodiazepines (clonazepam), and antidepressants.

Club drugs are readily available at all-night dance clubs and private parties and are primarily abused by teenagers and young adults. In Denver MDMA sold for \$8 to \$16 per tablet at the wholesale level and \$12 to \$20 per tablet at the retail level in the fourth quarter of FY2003, according to the DEA Denver Division and Denver Police Department. GHB sold for \$5 to \$10 per dosage unit and LSD sold for \$5 per dosage unit. Commonly diverted and abused pharmaceuticals include hydromorphone (Dilaudid), hydrocodone, benzodiazepines (clonazepam), methadone, oxycodone (OxyContin, Percocet), and alprazolam (Xanax). Methadone and OxyContin sold for \$1 per milligram at the retail level, Dilaudid sold for \$25 per tablet, hydrocodone sold for \$3 to \$5 per tablet, and Percocet sold for \$5 per tablet.

Most of the club drugs available in Denver are transported to the city; however, some GHB is produced in Denver. MDMA typically is transported by Caucasian criminal groups from Los Angeles, Miami, and New York via commercial aircraft and package delivery services.

Most club drugs are distributed by Caucasian criminal groups, local independent dealers, and Asian street gangs from businesses, nightclubs, bars, private residences, and open-air drug markets in Lower Downtown (Lo-Do) Denver, while pharmaceuticals often are obtained through various diversion techniques. Caucasian criminal groups continue to be the primary wholesale distributors of MDMA in Denver. However, Asian street gangs, particularly Asian Pride and Viet Pride, increasingly distribute the drug at the wholesale level. Caucasian independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of club drugs and ODDs in Denver. These dealers routinely sell and abuse club drugs, notably MDMA and GHB, at nightclubs and bars in Lo-Do. Diverted pharmaceuticals generally are obtained within the city through diversion techniques including prescription fraud, prescription forgery, and “doctor shopping,” which occurs when individuals, who may or may not have a legitimate ailment, visit numerous physicians to obtain drugs in excess of what should be legitimately prescribed. According to the Denver Police Department, club drugs and ODDs are distributed from six open-air drug markets in Districts 3 and 6.

Drug Money Laundering

Drug money laundering poses a threat to Denver. Mexican DTOs and criminal groups are the primary illicit drug money launderers in Denver. Hispanic, African American, and Asian street gangs launder money in Denver to a lesser extent. Illicit drug proceeds typically are transported to Mexico, California, or Texas using private vehicles or couriers aboard commercial aircraft or buses. In 2002 more than \$542,000 was seized while in transport from Denver to California and southwestern states, and more than \$1 million was seized en route to Denver from regional markets in Nebraska and Wyoming, according to the DEA El Paso Intelligence Center.

Mexican DTOs and criminal groups also use wire transfer facilities to send drug proceeds to family members or their sources of supply in California or Mexico. Other significant money laundering methods used in Denver include structuring bank deposits and money order purchases; purchasing real estate or vehicles; investing in securities; commingling drug proceeds with revenue generated by legitimate businesses, particularly automobile dealerships; and utilizing rapid transfers of funds to offshore bank accounts in the Caribbean. In FY2003 the DEA Denver Division seized nearly \$4 million in assets from alleged drug traffickers, including a single seizure of nearly \$2 million.

Changes/Emerging Trends

Hispanic street gangs, particularly Sureños 13, increasingly are distributing Mexico-produced heroin in Denver. Gang members acquire the drug from other gang members or family members in the area near the U.S.–Mexico border and transport it to Denver in private vehicles for retail distribution. Street gangs also are suspected of transporting Central American youths to Denver, providing them with residences and allowances, and using them to distribute heroin.

GHB abuse is now commonplace in some nightclubs and bars in Lo-Do Denver. GHB overdoses can occur easily depending on purity. Typically they are nonfatal and are characterized by brief periods of unconsciousness. Some GHB abusers write a large letter G on their hands or foreheads to alert bystanders not to phone paramedics or authorities should the abuser lose consciousness.

Colorado passed “remitter house” legislation in 1998 that allows individuals to transfer funds from convenient locations such as grocery stores, local businesses, and private residences. Investigations show that many individuals operate remitter businesses located in homes and apartments. Mexican criminal groups often use these services to make multiple transactions of less than \$3,000 per day under different names in order to circumvent anti-money laundering regulations.

Impacts and Impediments

Impacts

In the Denver metropolitan area, task forces supported by the Rocky Mountain HIDTA and U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Assistance have initiated programs to educate community and business leaders; neighborhood police, fire, and rescue personnel; and local retailers about the chemicals, dangers, and warning signs associated with methamphetamine production. As a result of these information-sharing efforts, the number of methamphetamine laboratories seized in the metropolitan area has increased as patrol officers, retailers, and citizens forward increasing numbers of tips and leads regarding illicit drug production.

The Rocky Mountain HIDTA, in cooperation with the state highway patrol agencies of Colorado, Utah, and Wyoming, created the Rocky Mountain Highway Patrol Network (RMHPN). RMHPN fosters information- and intelligence-sharing among the agencies involved and seeks to increase seizure, arrest, and prosecution rates in all three states. The weekly bulletin published by RMHPN highlights significant interdiction events and is credited by participating agencies with increasing the motivation of patrol officers.

The National Jewish Medical Center, in cooperation with the Denver Police Department, North Metro HIDTA Task Force, Colorado Department of Human Services, and the DEA Denver Division, has implemented a research program to study the effects of exposure to the atmosphere at methamphetamine laboratories upon first responders, producers, and bystanders (particularly children). The results will be used to educate medical staff about best practices in treating patients based on one-time or long-term exposure, as well as to educate law enforcement about the appropriate use of environmental protection gear.

The Denver Police Department operates a 24-hour narcotics tip line. Local citizens have provided information on drug activity in their neighborhoods, and area businesses such as grocery stores have reported large purchases of pseudoephedrine or other methamphetamine precursors.

In 2002 the Colorado state legislature took action to combat methamphetamine production. The state's criminal code was amended to recognize pseudoephedrine and phenylpropanolamine as methamphetamine precursor chemicals and criminalize their possession with intent to produce methamphetamine. Bills that would make it felony child abuse to produce drugs in a home with children present also were introduced and are pending. These bills would allow authorities to sue parents in civil court to remove children from homes in which methamphetamine laboratories are discovered.

Impediments

None.

Sources

Local

Denver Police Department
Criminal Investigation Division
Crime Laboratory
Narcotic Interdiction Unit
Street Enforcement Section
Vice and Drug Control Bureau
Complex Investigation Unit
Front Range Task Force
Metro Gang Task Force

State

Colorado Department of Human Services
Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division

Federal

Executive Office of the President
Office of National Drug Control Policy
High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area
Rocky Mountain
North Metro HIDTA Task Force
Rocky Mountain Highway Patrol Network

U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Census Bureau

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Office of Applied Studies
Drug Abuse Warning Network

U.S. Department of Justice
Drug Enforcement Administration
Denver Division
El Paso Intelligence Center
National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System
Operation Convoy
Operation Jetway
Operation Pipeline

National Institute of Justice
Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program

U.S. Sentencing Commission

Other

National Jewish Medical Center



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