



# 2021 Midwest HIDTA Threat Assessment

Midwest HIDTA Investigative Support Center

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## I. Scope

The 2021 Midwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) Threat Assessment identifies current and emerging illicit drug trends within the region's seven-state area. It strives to deliver accurate and timely strategic intelligence to assist law enforcement executives and other officials in the development of drug enforcement strategies to ensure the safety of our communities. This document provides an illicit drug threat overview with respect to the abuse, transportation, and organizations involved in drug trafficking. This document fulfills the statutory and grant requirements issued by the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), and has been approved by the Midwest HIDTA Executive Board.

## II. Executive Summary

### Overview

The Midwest HIDTA assesses methamphetamine as the region's greatest drug threat when considering its nexus to violence and other criminal activity. This is evident in both of the Midwest HIDTA's Law Enforcement (LES) and Public Health Surveys (PHS). Heroin/synthetic opioids and marijuana are the region's second and third-greatest drug threats, respectively. A higher percentage of drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) were found to be gang-related, violent, and poly-drug trafficking in 2020 compared to the previous year. The Midwest HIDTA's central location within the continental United States (U.S.) and extensive network of roadways make the region ideal for DTOs and criminal entrepreneurs intent on moving drugs into or through to other destinations.

Key findings derived from the data sources listed in Appendix I are presented and discussed in detail throughout this document. A description of the drug and DTO threats facing the Midwest HIDTA region include, but are not limited to, the following:

- ❖ Marijuana, methamphetamine, and heroin/synthetic opioids are the most widely available and widely used drugs in the Midwest region.
- ❖ Law enforcement and public health agencies report unprecedented levels of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids in the region's illicit drug supply. Fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses have surged as a result.
- ❖ Privately owned vehicles, the United States Postal Service (USPS), and commercial parcel services (e.g. FedEx, UPS) are the most common methods used by DTOs to traffic drugs into and throughout the Midwest region. The number of seizures in which mailing services were used to traffic drugs into the Midwest HIDTA doubled from 2019 to 2020.<sup>1</sup>
- ❖ Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives documented 770 DTOs operating within the region in 2020, with 7,733 members and 1,178 leaders identified.<sup>2</sup> This is a 21 percent increase from the 638 DTOs identified in 2019.
- ❖ Mexican DTOs continue to dominate virtually every aspect of the drug trade across the Midwestern U.S.
- ❖ DTOs in the Midwest HIDTA have adopted novel technologies to facilitate communication, obtain payment, and monitor courier location. These platforms include encrypted messaging applications, social media, portable GPS devices, and the dark web.
- ❖ Nearly 70 percent of Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives reported that DTOs engaged in money laundering activities that were separate and distinct from independent money laundering organizations (MLOs).
- ❖ The Midwest HIDTA experienced a three percent increase in drug-related overdose fatalities from 2018 to 2019, the most recent year for which data is available.<sup>3</sup>

### III. The Midwest HIDTA Region

The Midwest HIDTA region is a vast and varied area with equally varied drug threats. The region spans more than 428,000 square miles, making it the largest geographic area of the 33 HIDTAs. The Midwest HIDTA region consists of 71 designated counties that fall within the following seven states: Iowa (IA), Kansas (KS), Missouri (MO), Nebraska (NE), North Dakota (ND), South Dakota (SD), and Illinois (IL). The Midwest HIDTA has a total of 57 initiatives (see Appendix III for complete list, by state), including 40 drug enforcement task forces, six domestic highway interdiction initiatives, six intelligence initiatives, two prevention initiatives, and three support initiatives. The 57 initiatives include 156 participating agencies from federal, state and local law enforcement. A map of the Midwest HIDTA region is shown in Figure 1 depicting HIDTA designated counties, interstate highway systems and ports of entry with Canada. Additional state maps may be found in Appendix V: State Maps.

The U.S. Census Bureau estimates the population of the Midwest HIDTA to be 15.89 million in 2019. The region is comprised of metropolitan districts, medium and small cities, and many rural areas. The most populous urban centers are St. Louis, MO, and Kansas City, KS-MO, which rank 20<sup>th</sup> and 31<sup>st</sup>, respectively, amongst the largest metropolitan statistical areas in the United States. Omaha-Council Bluffs, NE-IA, Des Moines, IA, and Wichita, KS, are other cities ranking in the top 100 most populated metropolitan statistical areas, according to 2019 U.S. Census Bureau information. However, less than half of the overall population of the Midwest HIDTA resides in these large urban areas. Table 1 presents information on the most populous metropolitan areas in the Midwest HIDTA region.

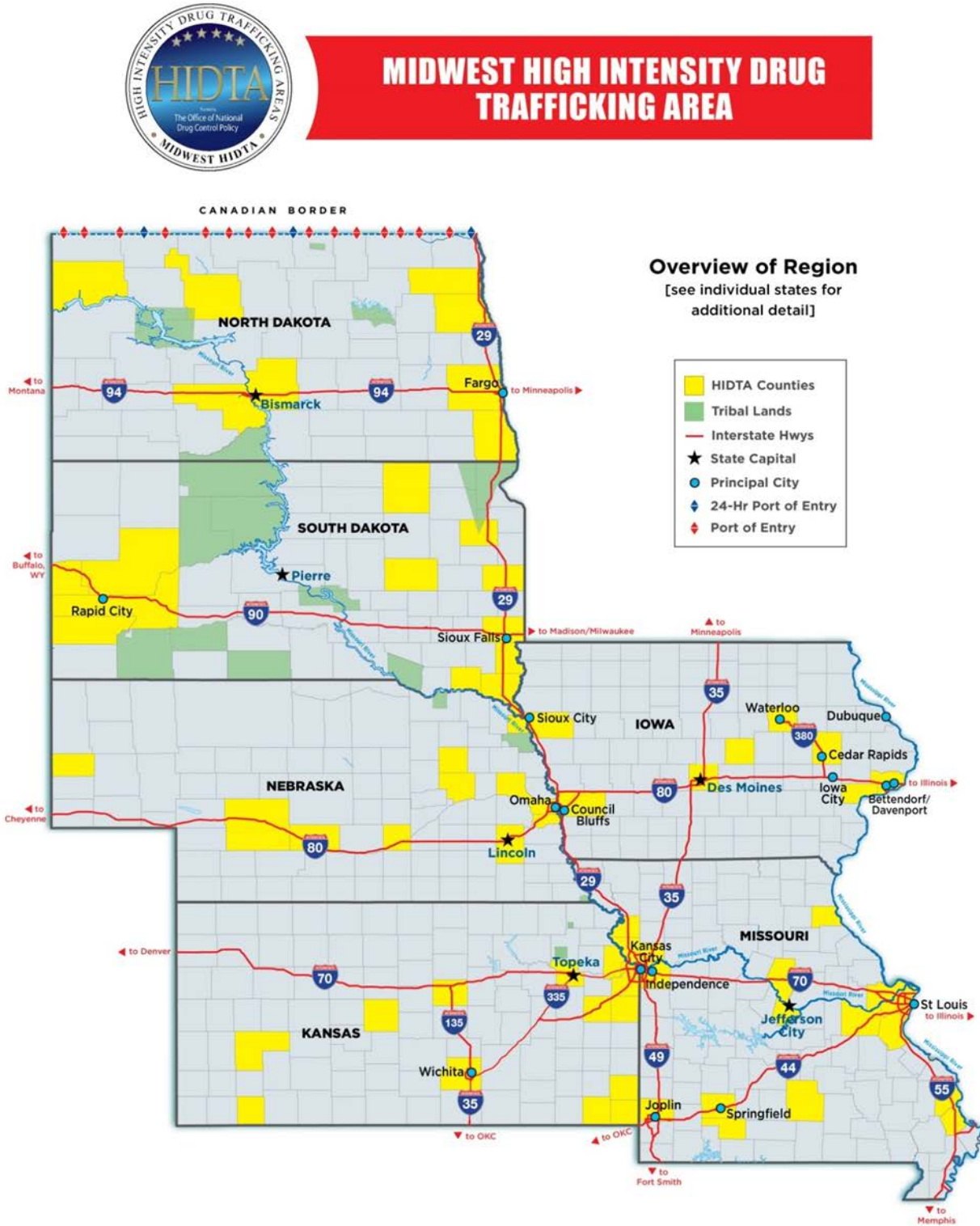
**Table 1. 2019 U.S. Population Ranking of the Most Populated Metropolitan Statistical Areas in the Midwest HIDTA Region.<sup>4 a</sup>**

2019 Ranking of the Most Populated Metropolitan Areas		
U.S. Population Ranking	City, State	2019 Estimated Population
20	St. Louis, MO-IL	2,803,228
31	Kansas City, KS-MO	2,157,990
57	Omaha-Council Bluffs , NE-IA	949,442
83	Des Moines, IA	699,292
94	Wichita, KS	640,218

Considered the heartland of the country, the population of the Midwest HIDTA is diverse, with all races, classes, genders, religions, and socioeconomic statuses represented. Criminal organizations can easily assimilate within any of the communities and conceal their operations to avoid detection.

<sup>a</sup> 2020 metropolitan statistical area data from the U.S. Census Bureau is not yet available.

Figure 1. Overall Map of the Midwest HIDTA Region Depicting HIDTA Designated Counties, Interstate Highway System and Ports of Entry with Canada.<sup>b</sup>



<sup>b</sup> Individual state maps may be found in Appendix V

## Drug Transportation Methods

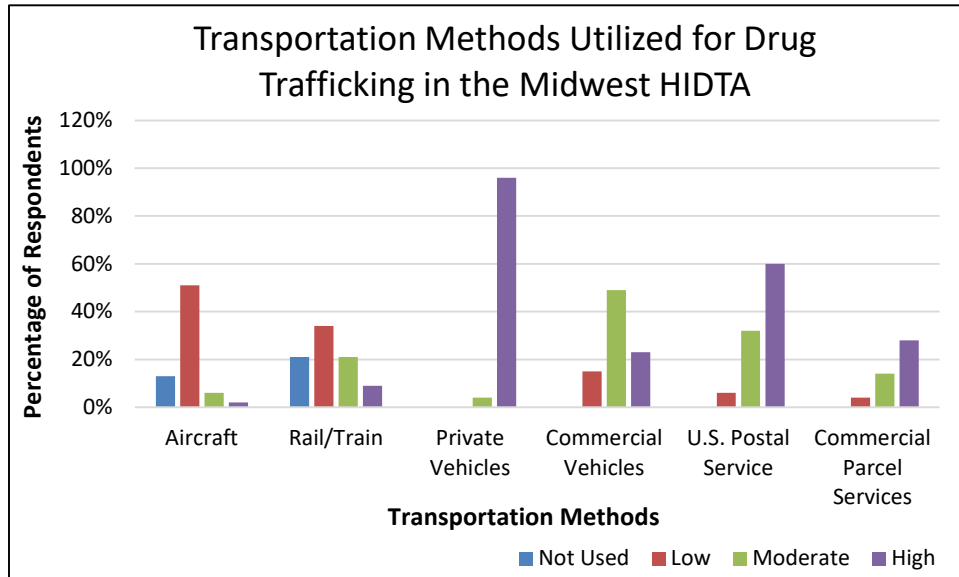
The Midwest HIDTA assesses that private passenger vehicles, the USPS, and commercial mailing services are the primary drug transportation methods used by DTOs to transport illicit drugs into and throughout the Midwest HIDTA region. The Midwest HIDTA region contains more than 4,300 miles of interstate highways and an international border stretching over 300 miles. The key transportation routes are Interstate (I)-70, I-80, I-90, I-94, I-29, and I-35. With its central location, there are a number of transportation hubs in the Midwest HIDTA allowing easy access to other points in the United States. For instance, Kansas City, KS-MO, located near the geographic center of the United States and at the intersection of several of the nation's busiest interstate highways (I-29, I-49, I-35, I-70), is a major transit point for the transportation of drugs and drug proceeds to and from significant market areas across the country. Furthermore, the convergence of I-44, I-55, I-64, and I-70 in St. Louis, MO, provides easy access for the transportation of drugs and bulk cash via commercial and privately owned vehicles. Other smaller transportation hubs include Fargo, ND, where I-29 and I-94 intersect, and Des Moines, IA, where I-80 and I-35 intersect. Given the 310-mile border, including the 18 ports of entry North Dakota shares with Canada, there is an expansive roadway infrastructure and a large international border for drug traffickers to exploit.

I-35 is particularly useful as a transportation route for Mexican DTOs. Converging with I-70 and I-29 in Kansas City, I-35 covers approximately 1,568 miles in the U.S., from Laredo, Texas, to Duluth, Minnesota, and runs directly through the Midwest HIDTA in Kansas, Missouri, and Iowa. Following I-35 into Mexico, it becomes Federal Highway 85, which runs southward from Nuevo Laredo, just across the Mexican border from the U.S., through Monterrey, Ciudad Victoria, Pachuca, and to the southern edge of Mexico City.<sup>5</sup>

When asked to indicate the levels at which various transportation methods are utilized in the Midwest HIDTA to traffic drugs, 96 percent of Midwest HIDTA initiatives indicated that privately owned vehicles are used at a high level, the highest percentage for any transportation method. Law enforcement initiatives claimed that traffickers often attempt to conceal contraband within natural or man-made compartments throughout the vehicle. Traffickers also reportedly concealed contraband within the tires, gas tanks, and various pieces of luggage within the vehicle.

The second and third-most utilized transportation methods were the USPS (60 percent) and commercial parcel services (60 percent). Commercial vehicles, such as tractor-trailers, were also frequently used to transport drugs in the Midwest HIDTA, with 23 percent of Midwest HIDTA initiatives reporting use as high and 49 percent reporting use as moderate. Drugs transported via tractor-trailer are often hidden within legitimate cargo items to avoid law enforcement detection. The use of aircraft and rail/trains were also utilized, although less than the aforementioned methods. Based on responses from the LES, we assess that DTOs also use trains that originate in Mexico to transport drugs closer to their destination. Figure 2 depicts the most commonly used drug transportation methods in the Midwest region, according to Midwest HIDTA initiatives.

**Figure 2. LES: Transportation Methods Utilized for Drug Trafficking in the Midwest HIDTA Region.<sup>6</sup>**



The roadways that traverse the Midwest HIDTA are vital to drug trafficking organizations. The 4,300 miles of interstate connecting the Midwest region to the remainder of the U.S. are an enormous challenge to law enforcement interdiction efforts. Approximately 94 percent of Midwest HIDTA initiatives reported a high level of interstate highway use by DTOs. U.S. highways (79 percent) and state highways/rural roads (47 percent) were also reported by Midwest HIDTA initiatives to be highly used by DTOs to traffic drugs

The use of the USPS and commercial parcel services are now a major transportation method used by DTOs. Seventeen percent of Midwest HIDTA initiatives expected DTOs to increasingly use mailing services to traffic drugs in the upcoming year. By utilizing USPS and commercial parcel services, DTOs can ship drugs and bulk currency into and out of the Midwest HIDTA with significantly less risk.



## IV. Drug Threats

### 1. Overview

The Midwest HIDTA assesses that methamphetamine, heroin/synthetic opioids, and marijuana are the primary drug threats to the region. Drug trafficking activities in the Midwest HIDTA region pose significant threats to public health and safety. These activities are a driving force of both violent and property crimes. The Midwest HIDTA evaluated the threat posed by each drug type in order to determine a ranking of drug threats. The evaluation consisted of Midwest HIDTA initiative responses to the LES and public health partner responses to the PHS, as well as drug trend and other related information collected over the past 12 months. Midwest HIDTA initiatives were asked to consider the nexus of the drug type to violent and property crimes when determining their rankings. Secondary factors included drug availability, abuse, overdose rate, and related fatalities. PHS respondents were asked to consider the greatest drug threat to their areas based upon the level of drug use and the number of inpatient/outpatient admissions over the past 12 months. Upon the evaluation of these criteria, the Midwest HIDTA rankings of drug threats by drug type are represented in Table 2.

*Table 2. Midwest HIDTA Threat Assessment Surveys: Drug Threat Ranking.<sup>7</sup>*

	<u>Drug Type</u>	<u>Availability</u>	<u>Use</u>	<u>Characteristics</u>
#1	Methamphetamine	High level of availability	High level of use	Primary contributor to both violent and property crime
#2	Heroin/Synthetic Opioids	High level of availability	High level of use	Major contributor to both violent and property crime
#3	Marijuana	High level of availability	High level of use	Major contributor to violent crime
#4	Controlled Prescription Drugs	Moderate level of availability	Moderate level of use	Opioids constitute majority of abuse
#5	Cocaine	Moderate level of availability	Moderate level of use	Consistent drug of abuse
#6	New Psychoactive Substances	Low level of availability	Low level of use	Materials soaked in NPSs often mailed into prisons/jails
#7	Other Dangerous Drugs	Low level of availability	Low level of use	PCP and MDMA constitute the majority of abuse

## 2. Methamphetamine

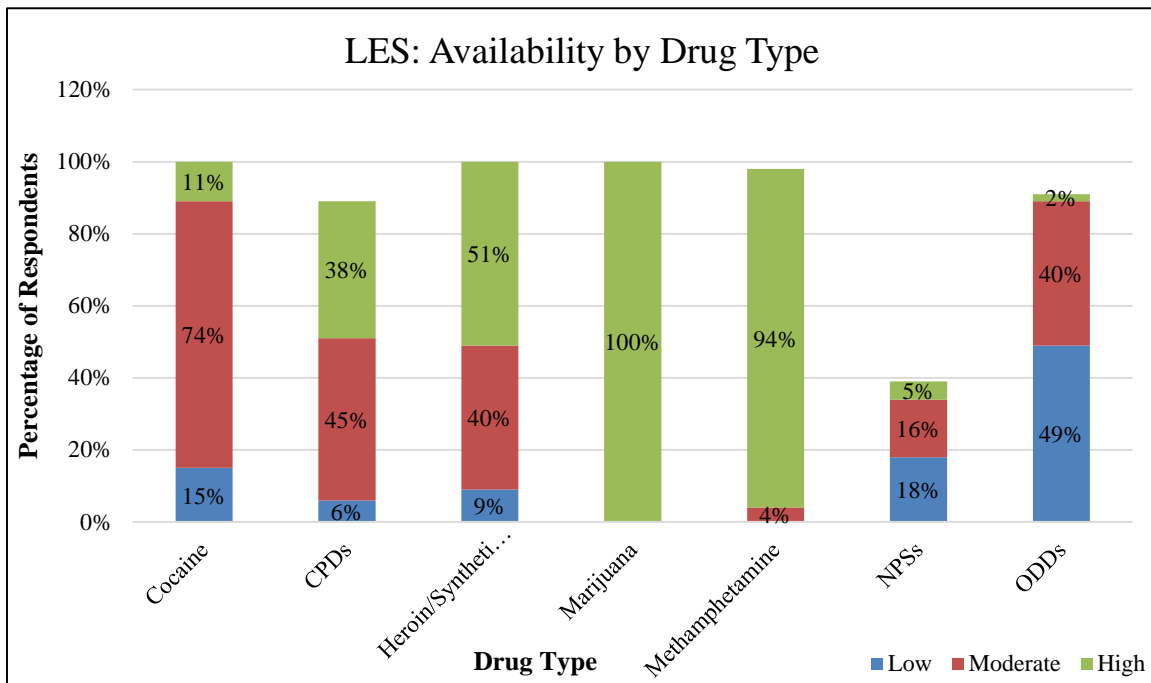
### A. Overview

Consistent with previous threat assessments, the Midwest HIDTA identified methamphetamine as the greatest drug threat to the Midwest region, particularly when considering its nexus to violent and property crime. Approximately 77 percent of Midwest HIDTA initiatives indicated that methamphetamine was the greatest drug threat in their areas of responsibility (AORs), more than any other drug type. Only one initiative (two percent) ranked methamphetamine below the top three threats in their AORs. From a public health perspective, methamphetamine is also considered the greatest drug threat, according to 44 percent of PHS respondents.

### B. Availability

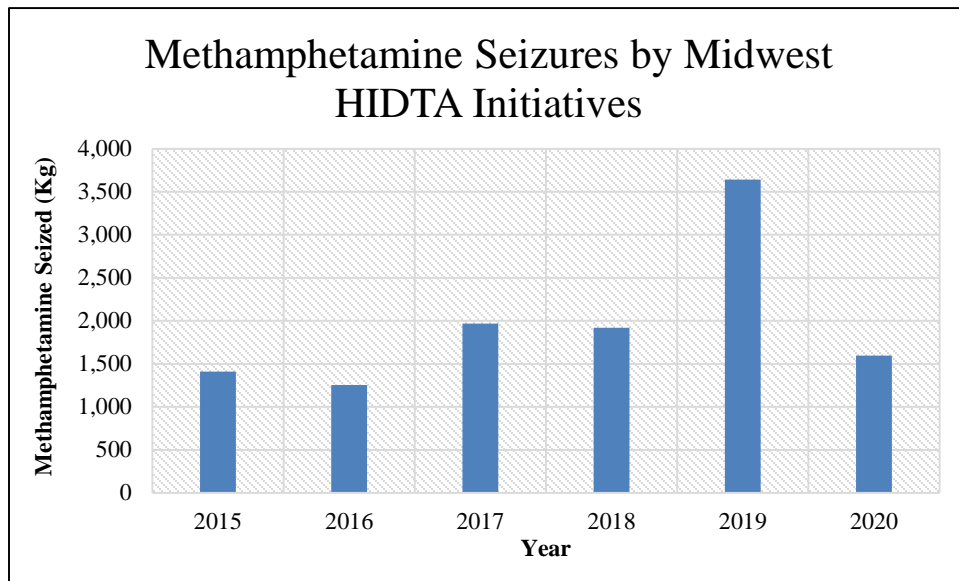
The Midwest HIDTA assesses the supply of methamphetamine in the Midwest region as high, with its popularity is unlikely to fade. With the exception of marijuana, LES respondents ranked methamphetamine as more available than any other drug type. In fact, 94 percent of survey respondents indicated that methamphetamine is highly available in their respective AORs. By comparison, approximately 51 percent of respondents designated heroin/synthetic opioids as highly available. Figure 3 shows the total number of LES responses indicating “low,” “moderate,” and “high” availability for each drug type.

**Figure 3. LES: Availability by Drug Type.<sup>8</sup>**



Midwest HIDTA initiatives seized 1,597 kilograms (3,521 pounds) of methamphetamine in 2020. This is a 56 percent decrease from 2019. This past year decrease in all drug types, with the exception of fentanyl, is the result of fewer drug interdiction operations by law enforcement due to both the COVID-19 pandemic and civil unrest.<sup>9 10</sup> Statewide lockdowns and other travel restrictions likely contributed to decreased seizures as well. Figure 4 depicts methamphetamine seizure totals by Midwest HIDTA initiatives from 2015 to 2020, as reported through the ONDCP Performance Measurement Process (PMP) data.

**Figure 4. Methamphetamine Seizures by Midwest HIDTA Initiatives, 2015-2020.<sup>11</sup>**



### C. Use

Ninety-two percent of Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives assessed the level of methamphetamine use in their areas as high. Methamphetamine use and trafficking has long been associated with crime and violence in the Midwest HIDTA region. This is supported by 68 percent of Midwest HIDTA initiatives that identified methamphetamine as the drug responsible for the greatest level of violence.

Nearly two-thirds (64 percent) of PHS respondents stated that methamphetamine use is high in their areas. Of the PHS respondents that operated an inpatient/outpatient admissions program, 47 percent noted an increase in inpatient admissions for methamphetamine in their areas. Approximately 95 percent PHS respondents claimed that adults (aged 26 and older) most commonly use methamphetamine and 50 percent claimed that young adults (aged 18-25) abused methamphetamine. Methamphetamine is often combined with a variety of other drugs in order to achieve a wide range of effects. The most popular drugs taken in combination with methamphetamine are marijuana, heroin, and synthetic opioids such as fentanyl.

The 2018-2019 National Survey on Drug Use and Health's state estimate data show an increase in past year estimated methamphetamine use by those 18 and older in every Midwest HIDTA state but Nebraska, which saw a 12 percent decrease over the previous year. Past year estimated methamphetamine usage increased by 30 percent in Iowa, 24 percent in Kansas, three percent in Missouri, 12 percent in North Dakota, and three percent in South Dakota. By comparison, past year methamphetamine use increased by 10 percent nationwide for the same age group.<sup>12 13</sup>

The Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) is a Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) program that includes drug treatment admission data.<sup>14</sup> This data is routinely collected by states in an effort to monitor drug abuse among their populations. Based on the TEDS data in Table 3, the number of admissions to drug treatment facilities for a substance use disorder involving amphetamines in Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, and South Dakota increased between 2015 and 2019.<sup>c</sup> The most recent data is not available for North Dakota, although admissions increased between 2015 and 2018.

**Table 3. Treatment Episode Data Sets – Amphetamines**

Treatment Episode Data Sets (TEDS)						
Amphetamines						
	Iowa	Kansas	Missouri	Nebraska	North Dakota	South Dakota
<b>2015</b>	6,357	1,671	7,224	2,296	592	1,371
<b>2016</b>	6,940	4,484	8,310	3,132	1,698	1,832
<b>2017</b>	7,719	4,749	8,701	3,593	1,789	2,438
<b>2018</b>	8,393	4,201	9,761	3,612	1,339	2,994
<b>2019</b>	8,236	3,802	9,026	3,754	N/A	3,359

\*SOURCE: Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS). Based on administrative data reported by States to TEDS through February 8, 2021.

The Midwest HIDTA is not the only region with high levels of methamphetamine use. A recent report from the Bureau of Justice Assistance details a resurgence in methamphetamine abuse in communities across the U.S.<sup>15</sup> The findings of the report confirmed a “recent, significant rise in mortality, morbidity, and violence directly attributed to methamphetamine abuse” and also voiced concerns that “the detrimental impact may be even greater than that of the original methamphetamine epidemic in the early 2000s” (Bureau of Justice Assistance, 2019, p. 1). Furthermore, a national study of healthcare-submitted drug tests found a 487 percent increase in methamphetamine use between 2013 (1.43 percent of all tests submitted that year) and 2019 (8.39 percent).<sup>16</sup> More recently, a study published in the Journal of the American Medical Association

<sup>c</sup> Amphetamines are the general categorization of amphetamine-type stimulants that SAMHSA records in their TEDS data. Methamphetamine is included within this dataset and is not reported separately.

found there has been a 23 percent increase in urinalysis samples testing positive for methamphetamine nationwide since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020.<sup>17</sup>

#### D. Price

The price of methamphetamine across the Midwest region increased significantly during the first half of 2020, but has largely returned to “pre-pandemic” prices. In an effort to stop the spread of COVID-19, the U.S. restricted non-essential border travel with Mexico on March 18, 2020. This resulted in a decrease in the supply of methamphetamine to U.S. markets, increasing its price.<sup>18</sup> The price of methamphetamine for nearly every quantity increased during the first half of 2020 as border restrictions and state lockdowns were strictly enforced. As interstate travel increased and individual state lockdowns lessened during the second half of 2020, Midwest HIDTA initiatives and other law enforcement entities across the country noted that methamphetamine prices had gradually returned to “pre-pandemic” levels.

The drug pricing data in Table 4 was collected from Midwest HIDTA initiatives through debriefs of confidential informants (CIs), proffer interviews of defendants, and undercover CI purchases.

**Table 4. 2020 Drug Pricing Data– Crystal Methamphetamine<sup>19</sup>**

<b>Crystal Methamphetamine</b>		
<b>Unit of Measurement</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Average</b>
Pound	\$2,800-\$12,000	\$6,441
1/2 Pound	\$2,000-\$5,400	\$3,417
1/4 Pound	\$1,100-\$4,000	\$2,694
Ounce	\$200-\$1,600	\$798
1/2 Ounce	\$300-\$650	\$456
1/8 Ounce (8-Ball)	\$56-\$360	\$193
Gram	\$20-\$250	\$77

#### E. Production

The Midwest HIDTA assesses that the majority of methamphetamine in the region originated in Mexico. Although 36 percent of Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives stated that methamphetamine production occurred within their AORs, almost all of this production involved the one-pot method—which typically yields one-ounce quantities for user amounts—or the red phosphorus/iodine method. Large-scale foreign labs have replaced the majority of the Midwest HIDTA region’s local clandestine methamphetamine labs since the late 2000s. The regional supply of methamphetamine is mostly imported from Mexico. Mexico-based “super labs” are capable of producing massive quantities of highly potent methamphetamine. With the shift to Mexican sources of supply, the purity levels for methamphetamine have increased and are

typically over 90 percent, with some areas reporting a 99 percent purity level. Domestic producers of methamphetamine in the Midwest HIDTA region have been unable to compete with Mexican producers, in part due to laws restricting sales of precursor chemicals utilized during production.

#### F. Transportation

Methamphetamine is most commonly transported into the region in either crystal form (i.e. “ice”) or suspended in solution by private passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles, and mailing services. While crystal methamphetamine is the most common form encountered by Midwest HIDTA initiatives, reporting suggests drug traffickers consider methamphetamine in solution as a low-risk concealment method. Methamphetamine in solution can be concealed within other liquids—such as gasoline or other automotive fluids—rendering it more difficult to detect. Methamphetamine in solution is transported into the region in large quantities by commercial vehicle or in smaller quantities while being concealed in windshield washer fluid reservoirs or other containers in privately owned vehicles. Once transported into the region, methamphetamine in solution is converted to crystal methamphetamine form in conversion laboratories using a variety of highly flammable materials. An increasing number of makeshift conversion laboratories, capable of converting several hundred pounds of methamphetamine, have been uncovered in parts of the Midwest HIDTA region and reported by Midwest HIDTA initiatives. In fact, 30 percent of Midwest HIDTA initiatives reported the presence of at least one methamphetamine conversion laboratory in their area. According to data from the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC), the quantity of methamphetamine in solution nationwide has sharply risen since 2015, while the number of seizures has decreased. This suggests that methamphetamine in solution is an effective concealment method as law enforcement struggles to detect it. According to EPIC, there were 10 incidents involving methamphetamine in solution within the Midwest HIDTA region in 2020, totaling approximately seven kilograms and four liters.<sup>d</sup>

#### G. Intelligence Gaps

The full extent to which Midwestern DTOs utilize methamphetamine conversion laboratories are unknown at this time. Regional law enforcement agencies may underreport the discovery of methamphetamine conversion laboratories due to these operations not being recognized as a clandestine laboratory.

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<sup>d</sup> Depending on the agency reporting the meth-in-solution seizure, the unit of measurement for the seizure may be entered as kilograms or liters.

### 3. Heroin/Synthetic Opioids

#### A. Overview

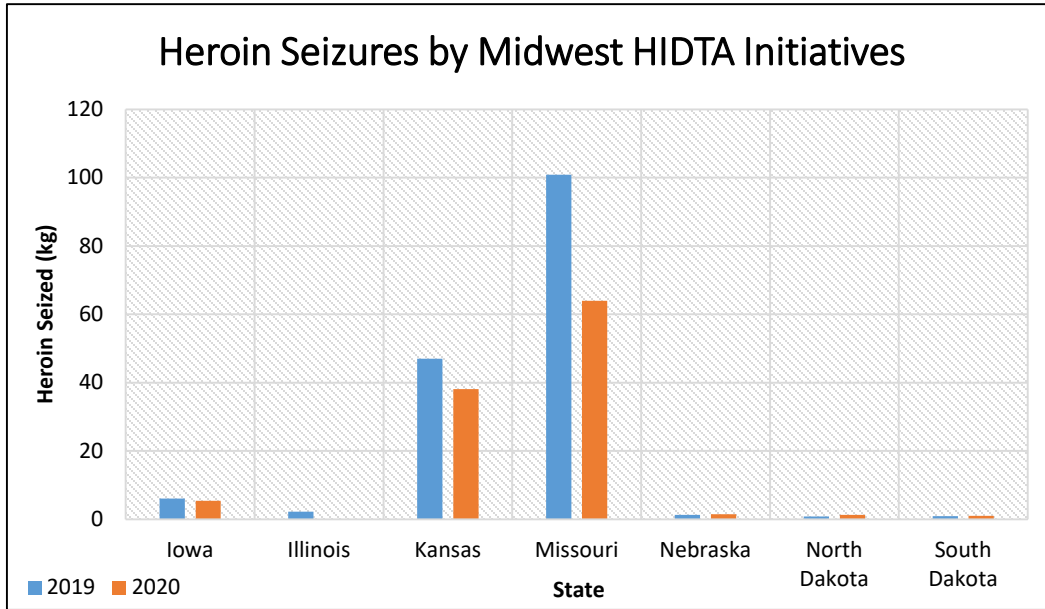
Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives report heroin and synthetic opioids as the second greatest drug threat to the region. Heroin/synthetic opioids pose a significant threat in the region due to their links to both violent and property crimes, their high availability, and the likelihood of overdose. Approximately 60 percent of law enforcement initiatives ranked heroin/synthetic opioids as either the first or the second greatest threat in their respective AORs. Approximately 15 percent of PHS respondents ranked heroin/synthetic opioids as their greatest drug threat. Heroin and synthetic opioids have the most impact in large, urban areas; however, these drugs have expanded into suburban and rural areas in the region.

Synthetic opioids, which include non-pharmaceutical fentanyl, fentanyl analogs, and other synthetic opioids such as isotonitazene, metonitazene, and buprenorphine, are usually produced in laboratories by transnational criminal organizations (TCOs) in China and Mexico before being transported into the Midwest HIDTA region. Some synthetic opioid abusers in the region purchase the drugs directly through the internet or dark web sources. Several Midwest HIDTA initiatives described a sharp increase in the prevalence of fentanyl within heroin samples, counterfeit pharmaceuticals, and other drugs like methamphetamine and cocaine. Drug users are often unaware that the drugs they purchase and abuse have been mixed with synthetic opioids, leading to an increased risk of overdose. However, law enforcement in parts of the region have also reported a specific demand for more potent forms of fentanyl and other synthetic opioids by heroin and other drug users.

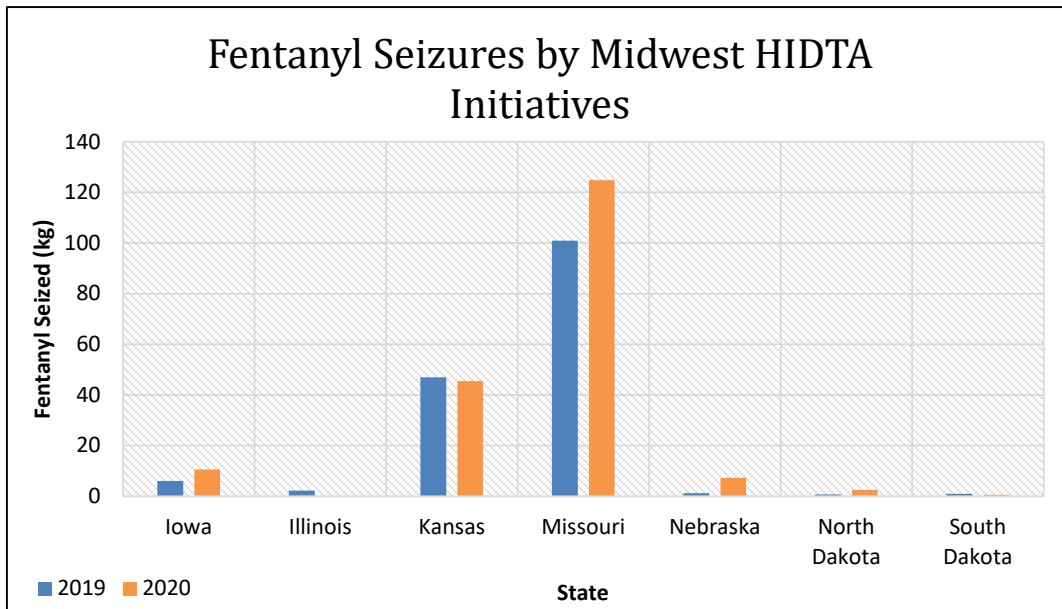
#### B. Availability

The Midwest HIDTA assesses the availability of heroin/synthetic opioids in the region as high. This was corroborated by 51 percent of the Midwest HIDTA's law enforcement initiatives. Seizures of heroin by Midwest HIDTA initiatives in Nebraska, North Dakota, and South Dakota increased in 2020. Seizures of heroin decreased in Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, and Missouri in 2020. Fentanyl seizures increased 75 percent for Iowa initiatives, 24 percent for Missouri initiatives, 478 percent for Nebraska initiatives, and 226 percent for North Dakota initiatives. These data points suggest DTOs have continued to shift their focus from heroin to fentanyl over the past 12 months.<sup>20</sup> Other potential reasons for this shift are explored in the "Production" section on page 18. Figures 5 and 6 show a comparison of the amount of heroin and fentanyl seized by Midwest HIDTA initiatives between 2019 and 2020 for each state in the region, respectively.

**Figure 5. Heroin Seizures by Midwest HIDTA Initiatives, 2019-2020.<sup>21</sup>**



**Figure 6. Fentanyl Seizures by Midwest HIDTA Initiatives, 2019-2020.<sup>22</sup>**





### C. Use

The Midwest HIDTA assesses the level of heroin/synthetic opioid use in the region as high, as indicated by 49 percent of law enforcement initiatives. Heroin/synthetic opioid abuse and trafficking is frequently associated with crime and violence in the Midwest HIDTA region, although less than methamphetamine. Approximately 13 percent of initiatives listed heroin/synthetic opioids as the drug responsible for the greatest level of violence and 17 percent claimed it was responsible for the greatest level of property crime.

Nearly 60 percent of PHS respondents listed heroin/synthetic opioid use as either high (26 percent) or moderate (32 percent) in their areas. Of those same respondents that listed heroin/synthetic opioid use as high or moderate, 63 percent noted an increase in inpatient admissions for heroin/synthetic opioids in their areas. The majority of PHS respondents claimed that young adults (63 percent) and adults (75 percent) most commonly used heroin/synthetic opioids. Heroin/synthetic opioids are often combined with a variety of other drugs in order to achieve a wide range of effects. Methamphetamine was the drug most commonly taken in combination with heroin/synthetic opioids in 2020, according to the Midwest HIDTA's public health partners. Marijuana and cocaine were the second and third-most reported drugs, following methamphetamine.

The *2018-2019 NSDUH* shows a recent increase in past year estimated heroin use by those 18 and older in Kansas (114 percent), Missouri (eight percent), Nebraska (nine percent), and South Dakota (seven percent). Past year estimated heroin usage decreased by six percent in Iowa and 14 percent in North Dakota, and eight percent for the U.S. as a whole.<sup>23 24</sup>

Based on the TEDS data in Table 5, the number of admissions to drug treatment facilities for a substance use disorder involving heroin declined in every Midwest HIDTA state other than South Dakota between 2015 and 2019. The most recent data is not available for North Dakota.

**Table 5. Treatment Episode Data Sets – Heroin**

Treatment Episode Data Sets (TEDS)						
Heroin						
	Iowa	Kansas	Missouri	Nebraska	North Dakota	South Dakota
2015	900	85	5,793	115	87	66
2016	935	242	5,685	120	281	94
2017	939	279	5,704	105	299	139
2018	1,077	286	7,389	123	183	219
2019	990	213	5,151	150	N/A	234

\*SOURCE: Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS). Based on administrative data reported by States to TEDS through February 8, 2021.

According to the results of a national study of healthcare-submitted drug tests, the use of fentanyl, both by itself and combined with methamphetamine, has steeply risen.<sup>25</sup> Among drug tests positive for illicit fentanyl, those that also tested positive for methamphetamine increased from 2.2 percent in 2013 to 30.37 percent in 2019, a 1,280 percent increase.<sup>26</sup> Not only are more people using illicit fentanyl, they are also combining it with other illicit drugs such as methamphetamine and cocaine. These drug combinations significantly increase the chance of fatal overdose.<sup>27</sup>

#### D. Price

The price of fentanyl and heroin in the Midwest HIDTA region varied significantly from region to region. The prices per unit of measurement for heroin and fentanyl are listed in Table 6 below.

**Table 6. 2020 Drug Pricing Data– Heroin & Fentanyl** <sup>28</sup>

Unit of Measurement	Heroin		Fentanyl	
	Range	Average	Range	Average
Kilogram	\$24,000-\$30,000	\$27,200	\$30,000-\$31,000	\$30,500
Ounce	\$350-\$2,100	\$1,371	\$1,500-\$2,000	\$1,700
Gram	\$40-\$250	\$150	\$50-\$250	\$118
1/2 Gram	\$40-\$200	\$97	N/A	N/A
1/8 Gram	\$20-\$33	\$26	N/A	N/A
1/10 Gram	\$20-\$40	\$29	N/A	N/A
Capsule/Pill	N/A	N/A	\$2-\$40	\$16

#### E. Production

The Midwest HIDTA assesses that the overwhelming majority of the region's heroin and fentanyl supply is cultivated outside of the region, although there was one instance of poppy cultivation in Kansas in 2020. In June 2020, law enforcement seized more than 4,000 poppy plants at a clandestine grow site in Kansas.<sup>29</sup> No clandestine fentanyl manufacturing sites within the region were reported to EPIC in 2020. The majority of the heroin within the Midwest HIDTA region is sourced from Mexico and South America. The majority of fentanyl within the Midwest HIDTA region is sourced from Mexico and China. There are two methods to synthesize fentanyl: the Janssen method and the Siegfried method. DEA's Fentanyl Signature Profiling Program identified that 91 percent of nationwide fentanyl submissions analyzed in 2019 were synthesized using the Janssen method.<sup>30</sup> The Janssen method is the more complex method of fentanyl synthesis, indicating that China and Mexico-based DTOs recruit skilled chemists to produce fentanyl. Evidence suggests that Mexican DTOs have shifted their focus from heroin cultivation to fentanyl production. The Midwest HIDTA has seen a decrease in heroin seizures and an increase in fentanyl seizures. Heroin production requires the cultivation of opium poppy, which is both

labor-intensive and time consuming. Fentanyl production, in contrast, requires only a series of precursor chemicals and a thorough understanding of chemistry. According to U.S. Government estimates, opium poppy cultivation in Mexico was recorded at 30,400 hectares in 2019, a 27 percent decrease from 2018.<sup>31</sup> This information may indicate that Mexican DTOs have recognized the advantages of fentanyl over heroin, explaining both the decrease in poppy cultivation and increased presence of fentanyl in traditional American heroin markets.

#### F. Transportation

Intelligence from Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives suggests that the source and type of heroin varies by area within the Midwest HIDTA region. Heroin in the easternmost parts of the region is typically in white powder form and tends to be sourced by gangs and other DTOs from the Chicago area. In the northernmost part of the region, brown powder, white powder heroin adulterated with fentanyl, and black tar heroin are all transported into the area from the Minneapolis, Detroit, and California areas, respectively. Heroin in the westernmost parts of the region is sourced from Denver and is typically in either black tar or crude brown powder form. Fentanyl is primarily transported into the area via private passenger vehicles and mailing services. All fentanyl seizures recorded in the DHE database for 2020 resulted from either a traffic or parcel interdiction.

#### G. Intelligence Gaps

The reason for the drastic increase in various drugs, such as methamphetamine and cocaine, containing fentanyl and fentanyl analogues is unknown to the Midwest HIDTA at this time. The Midwest HIDTA is also uncertain as to which stage in the drug distribution process fentanyl is added into the drug mixtures.

## 4. Marijuana

### A. Overview

Marijuana is the most widely available and abused illicit drug within the Midwest HIDTA region. Because of this, marijuana is the third most significant drug threat to the region. Fifty-one percent of Midwest HIDTA initiatives ranked marijuana within their top three drug threats. Respondents to the PHS listed marijuana as the second greatest drug threat. Marijuana may become an even greater threat once the “medical” and/or “recreational” marijuana programs mature in Missouri, North Dakota, and South Dakota. North Dakota legalized “medical” marijuana through regulations that became effective in April 2018. Missouri legalized “medical” marijuana in November 2018, although the program is in its infancy. South Dakota legalized both “medical” and “recreational” marijuana in November 2020, although the constitutionality of “recreational” marijuana has been challenged by the Governor’s office. Illinois has also legalized “recreational” marijuana, while Iowa only allows for specialized cannabidiol (CBD) products as part of its medical CBD program.

Similar to methamphetamine, the region has experienced a change in sources of marijuana over the past decade. Whereas previously much of the marijuana in the Midwest HIDTA region was grown in Mexico and transported into the region after being smuggled through the Southwest Border, a majority of the marijuana in the region today comes from sources within the U.S. Domestically-produced marijuana, a majority of which is grown hydroponically in states where marijuana has been decriminalized and/or legalized in some form, typically has much higher tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) content than Mexican-sourced marijuana. In the past several years, Midwest HIDTA initiatives have reported an influx of THC cartridges that are designed to be vaporized in electronic cigarettes/vape pens. According to law enforcement sources, these THC cartridges are increasing in availability and are increasingly seized via highway interdiction. Reporting suggests that large quantities of these cartridges are purchased in the “legal” Western states and are trafficked to other parts of the U.S.

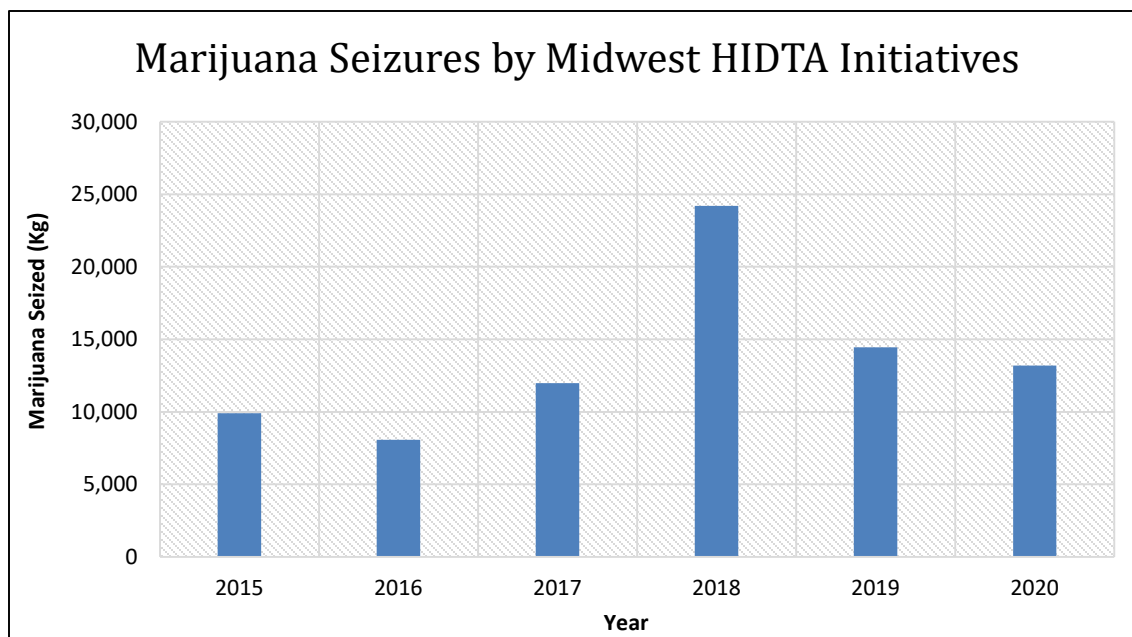
Marijuana decriminalization has created a readily available supply of highly potent domestically cultivated marijuana for transport into the region. Reporting from regional law enforcement agencies suggests that criminal organizations often clash with one another for the right to distribute marijuana from “legal” states in their territory. Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives in Kansas City and Omaha reported a high level of violence surrounding the illicit marijuana trade in 2020.

### B. Availability

Marijuana is the most widely available drug in the region. All Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives reported marijuana as highly available within their AORs. Midwest HIDTA initiatives seized 13,192 kilograms (29,083 pounds) of marijuana in 2020, along with

1,216 marijuana plants. Figure 7 depicts marijuana seizure totals by Midwest HIDTA initiatives from 2015 to 2020, as reported through PMP data.

**Figure 7. Marijuana Seizures by Midwest HIDTA Initiatives, 2015-2020.<sup>32</sup>**



### C. Use

Marijuana is the most widely used illicit drug in the Midwest HIDTA region, according to 98 percent of law enforcement initiatives. One-fifth believed marijuana contributed the most to violence in their areas. PHS respondents listed marijuana as the drug with the highest level of use. Of the PHS respondents that operate an inpatient or outpatient admissions program, approximately 37 percent cited an increase in marijuana-related admissions over the past 12 months. A further 37 percent of respondents cited marijuana-related admissions as remaining the same over the past 12 months. The overwhelming majority of PHS respondents claimed that teens (80 percent) and young adults (66 percent) most commonly abused marijuana. Data from the PHS states that marijuana is the drug most frequently combined with other substances. The most popular drugs taken in combination with marijuana are methamphetamine, heroin, synthetic opioids, and CPDs.

The *2018-2019 NSDUH* shows an increase in past year estimated marijuana use by those 18 and older in every state within the Midwest HIDTA region except Iowa and South Dakota. According to the data, Kansas and Nebraska experienced the greatest increase, as Kansas' usage increased seven percent and Nebraska's usage increased 13 percent.

Based on the TEDS data in Table 7, the number of admissions to drug treatment facilities for a substance use disorder involving marijuana declined for every state in the Midwest HIDTA region. The reason for the decrease in marijuana admissions, despite the apparent increase in overall marijuana use, is unknown at this time. The push for marijuana decriminalization in certain

parts of the Midwest HIDTA region may have played a role in the decreased number of marijuana admissions, especially if court-mandated marijuana substance abuse programs are less prevalent, although this information is currently unsubstantiated. The most recent data is not available for North Dakota.

**Table 7. Treatment Episode Data Sets – Marijuana**

Treatment Episode Data Sets (TEDS)						
Marijuana						
	Iowa	Kansas	Missouri	Nebraska	North Dakota	South Dakota
2015	7,541	1,805	7,502	1,274	718	1,690
2016	7,061	3,112	7,258	1,371	1,314	1,548
2017	6,795	2,971	6,732	1,486	896	1,537
2018	6,566	2,599	6,491	1,341	462	1,637
2019	6,092	1,497	5,229	1,259	N/A	1,572

\*SOURCE: Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS). Based on administrative data reported by States to TEDS through February 8, 2021.

#### D. Price

The price of marijuana in the Midwest HIDTA region is dependent upon the origin of the marijuana and the form that it takes. For example, an ounce of marijuana flower is generally less expensive than an ounce of butane hash oil. Additionally, marijuana originating from a Colorado dispensary is generally more expensive than marijuana originating from Mexico because of its higher THC content. Table 8 depicts marijuana pricing information obtained from Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives.

**Table 8. 2020 Drug Pricing Data– Marijuana<sup>33</sup>**

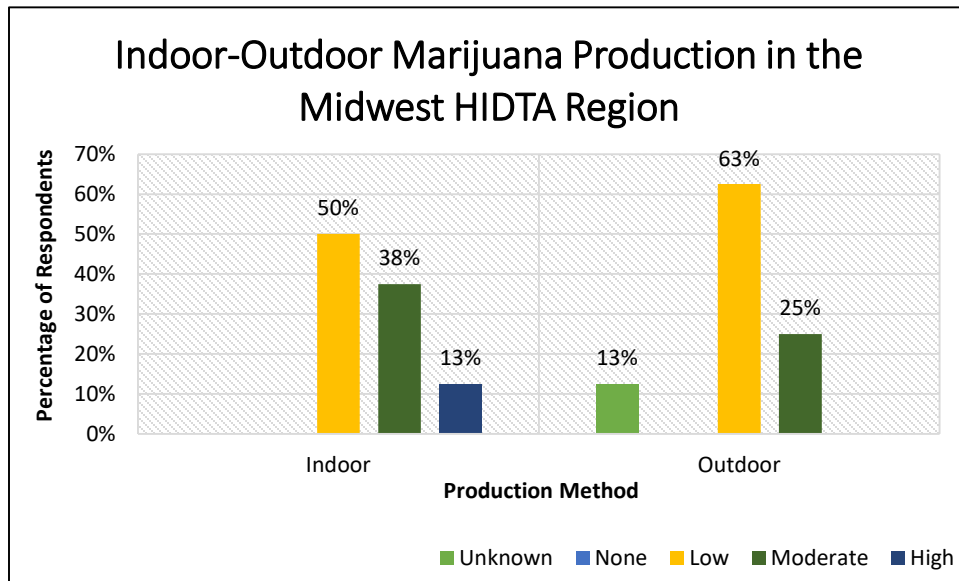
Marijuana		
Unit of Measurement	Range	Average
Pound	\$500-\$3,500	\$2,000
Ounce	\$60-\$463	\$262
Gram	\$6-\$57	\$32
THC Cartridge	\$10-\$80	\$45
Gram of Wax	\$28-\$65	\$47

#### E. Production

The Midwest HIDTA assesses that the majority of marijuana in the region is transported in from areas where marijuana has been decriminalized. Only 17 percent of initiatives stated that marijuana production occurred within their area. Indoor marijuana production is more prevalent in the region than outdoor production. Half of the initiatives that reported marijuana production

within their areas indicated that indoor marijuana production occurred at a moderate or high level in their AORs and only 25 percent of respondents indicated that outdoor marijuana production occurred at a moderate level. Indoor production methods, which protect plants from harsh weather conditions in the region, also allow producers greater control over THC content in marijuana. Indoor growing also affords a higher degree of concealment from law enforcement as the production sites are hidden from public view. Figure 8 shows levels of indoor and outdoor marijuana production in the Midwest HIDTA region, as indicated by law enforcement initiatives.

**Figure 8. LES: Indoor-Outdoor Marijuana Production in the Midwest HIDTA Region.**<sup>34</sup>



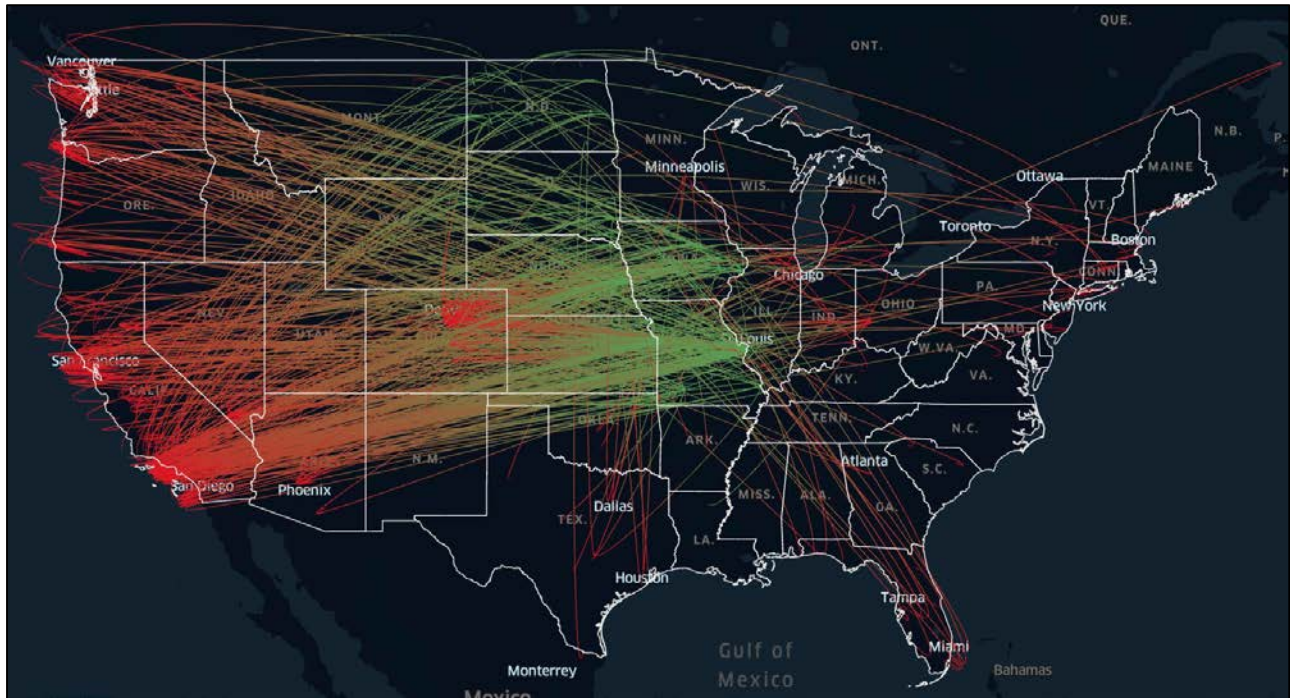
In December 2018, Congress passed the Agriculture Improvement Act of 2018 (also known as the 2018 Farm Bill), which legalized the production, cultivation, and retail sale of industrial hemp. Every state within the Midwest HIDTA region now participates in industrial hemp cultivation. There have been at least two instances of drug traffickers in the Midwest HIDTA region smuggling illicit marijuana under the guise of industrial hemp in the time since the bill's passing, either comingling marijuana with industrial hemp shipments or by falsifying documents in an effort to disguise marijuana as legal hemp.<sup>35</sup>

#### F. Transportation

The majority of marijuana and marijuana products are transported into the Midwest region from California, Colorado, Oregon, and Washington.<sup>36</sup> Private passenger vehicles are the most common methods of transporting marijuana into the region, although the use of mailing services for quantities up to 100 pounds have increased over the past 12 months. Figures 9 and 10 depict the instances of marijuana shipped via mailing services into the Midwest HIDTA region during the second half of 2020.

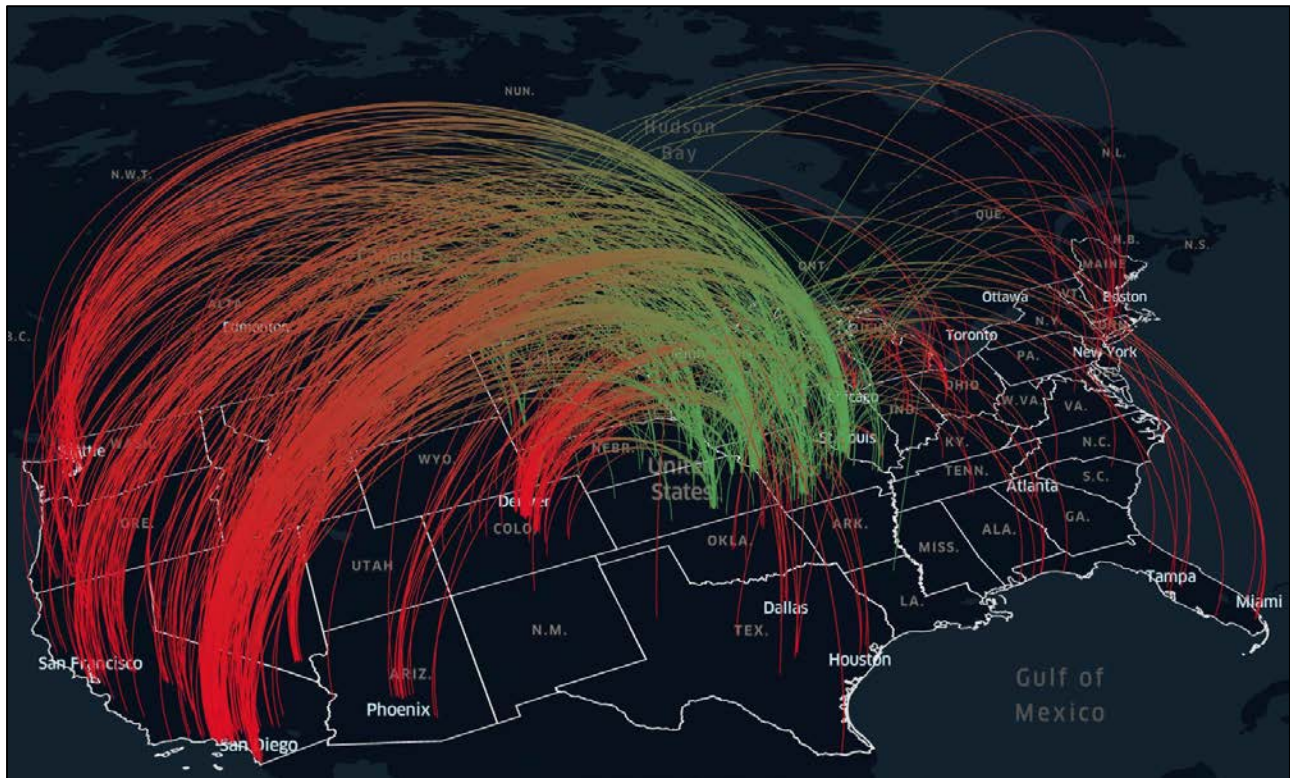


**Figure 9: Marijuana Transported into the Midwest HIDTA Region via the Use of Mailing Services, Q3-Q4 2020.<sup>37</sup>**



Source: MW HIDTA Law Enforcement Partners

**Figure 10: Marijuana Transported into the Midwest HIDTA Region via the Use of Mailing Services 3D, Q3-Q4 2020<sup>38</sup>**



Source: MW HIDTA Law Enforcement Partners



## 5. Controlled Prescription Drugs

### A. Overview

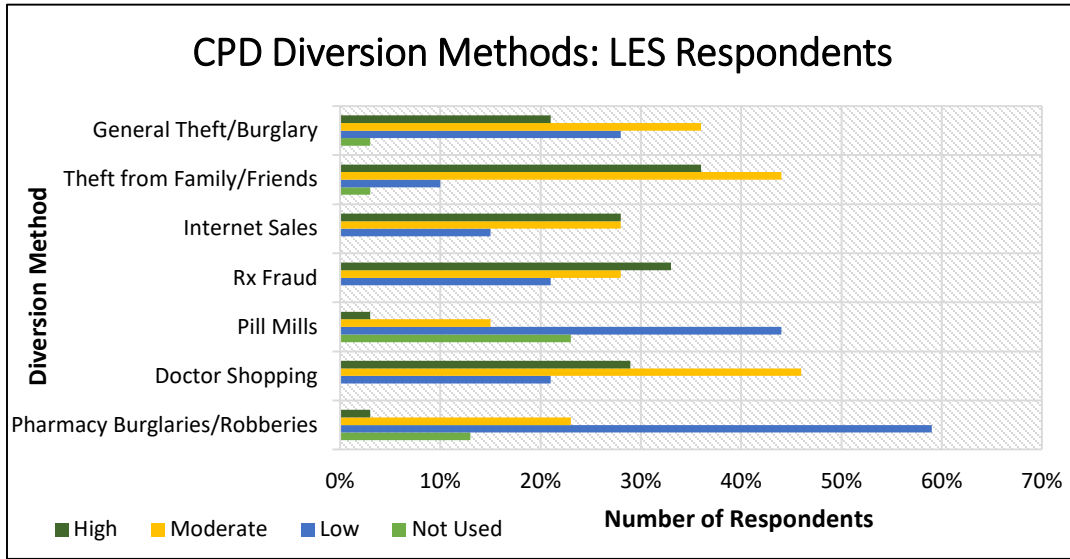
The Midwest HIDTA assesses that CPD abuse within the region is widespread and represents a constant drug threat. A significant amount of the CPDs seized by Midwest HIDTA initiatives involve counterfeit pharmaceuticals. Laboratory analysis often reveals the presence of fentanyl, methamphetamine, other opioids, or benzodiazepine analogues. Although only one Midwest HIDTA initiative ranked CPDs as the greatest drug threat to their area, 30 percent ranked CPDs within the top three drug threats in their AORs. Eight percent of PHS respondents reported CPDs as their primary drug threat. The legal yet controlled status of CPDs has resulted in their moderate to high levels of availability and use.

Missouri remains the only state in the country that has yet to enact a statewide Prescription Drug Monitoring Program (PDMP).<sup>39</sup> This has proven to be a significant hurdle to law enforcement in understanding the scope of CPD abuse and diversion. Despite the lack of a statewide program, St. Louis County operates a localized PDMP that includes about 75 jurisdictions around the state.<sup>40</sup> The prohibition of law enforcement in several Midwest HIDTA states from obtaining PDMP information to identify over-prescribing doctors also limits the overall effectiveness of these programs in addressing the opioid epidemic.

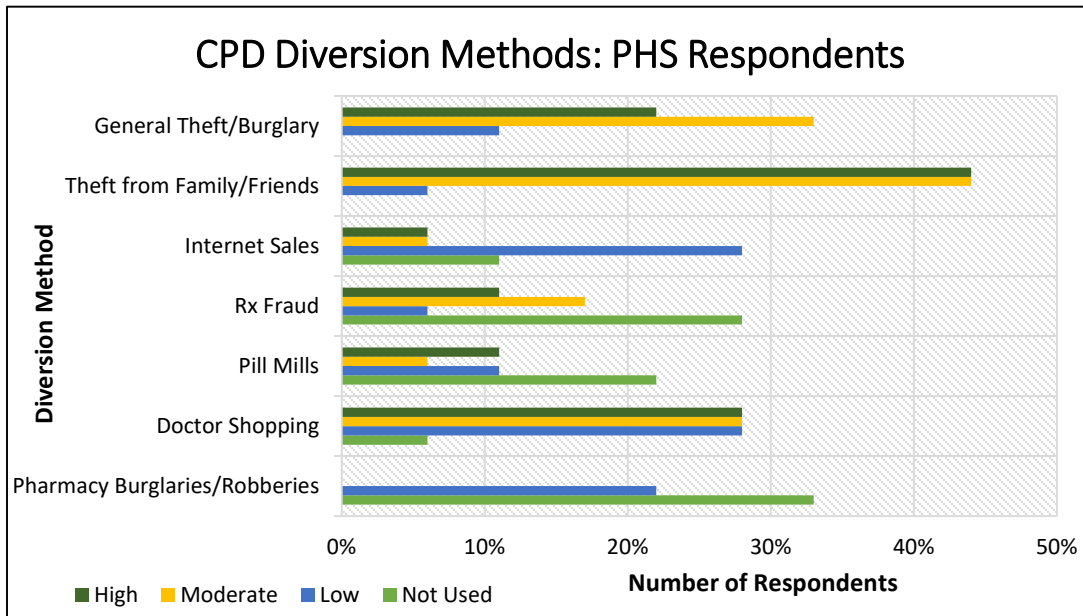
### B. Availability

Eighty-three percent of Midwest HIDTA initiatives reported CPD availability as either moderate (45 percent) or high (38 percent) within their AORs. Pharmaceutical diversion is responsible for the majority of illicit use. Eighty-three percent of LES respondents indicated that CPD diversion occurs in their AORs. According to responses from the PHS, opioids have the highest level of diversion of any CPD category. Sedatives (e.g. Xanax) are the second most diverted CPD type, followed by stimulants (e.g. Adderall). Both muscle relaxant (e.g. Soma) and anabolic steroid diversion are considered low. Figures 11 and 12 illustrate the most common CPD diversion methods, as reported by respondents to the LES and PHS.

**Figure 11. CPD Diversion Methods: LES Respondents <sup>41</sup>**

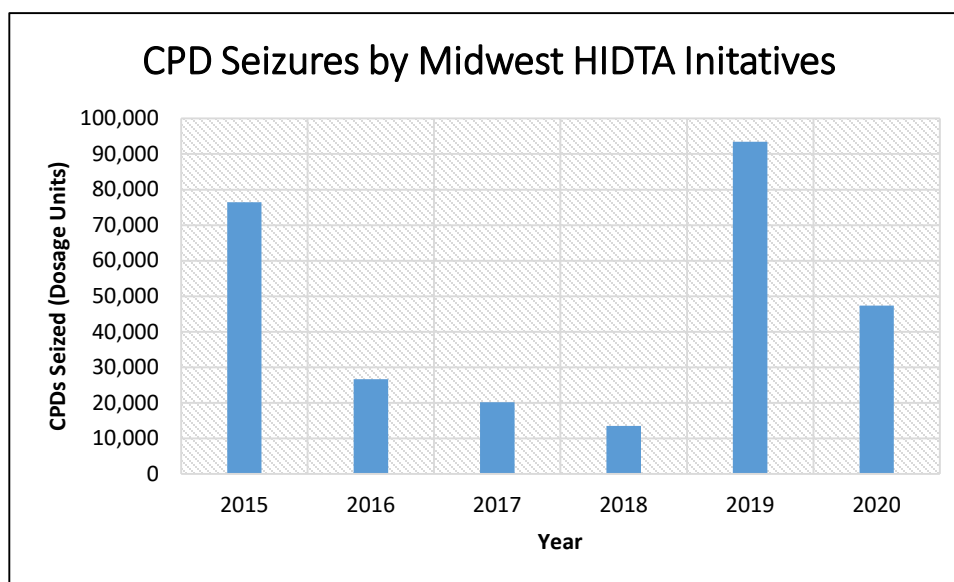


**Figure 12. CPD Diversion Methods: PHS Respondents <sup>42</sup>**



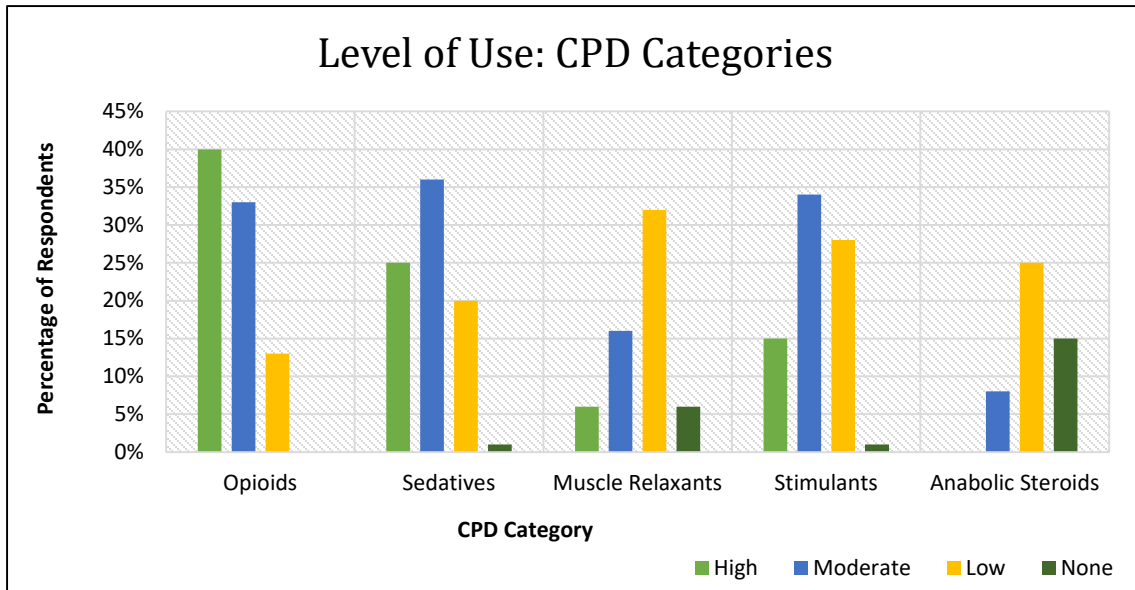
Midwest HIDTA initiatives seized 47,399 dosage units and 10 kilograms of CPDs in 2020.<sup>e</sup> Figure 13 depicts CPD seizure totals by Midwest HIDTA initiatives from 2015 to 2020, as reported in the PMP.

<sup>e</sup> This number is the total for all PMP prescription drug statistics, which include alprazolam, hydrocodone, oxycodone, and several other CPD types.

**Figure 13. CPD Seizures by Midwest HIDTA Initiatives, 2015-2020.**<sup>43</sup>

### C. Use

One-third (34 percent) of Midwest HIDTA initiatives reported high levels of CPD use in their AORs. Initiatives also reported that CPDs have the fourth highest levels of use in the Midwest HIDTA region, ranking behind marijuana (98 percent), methamphetamine (91 percent), and heroin and synthetic opioids (49 percent). Public health respondents shared this belief, as 28 percent reported CPD use as high and 44 percent reported it as moderate. PHS respondents claimed that opioids (40 percent) had the highest levels of use followed by sedatives (25 percent) and stimulants (15 percent). Muscle relaxants reportedly had moderate to low levels of use, while anabolic steroid use was low. Further PHS data concerning the level of CPD use illustrated in Figure 14. A significant number of CPD users—opioid-based CPD users in particular, develop an addiction to CPDs, even when taken according to doctor and pharmacist instructions. If an individual with a substance use disorder loses “legal” access to their CPD supply, they may seek out illicit CPDs or transition to cheaper, more potent opiates such as heroin.

**Figure 14. CPD Use as Reported by PHS Respondents.<sup>44</sup>**

Responses to the PHS indicate that adults, young adults, and teens alike equally abuse CPDs. Of the PHS respondents that operate either an inpatient or outpatient admissions program, 42 percent cited an increase in admissions for CPDs over the past 12 months. Thirty-seven percent stated that CPD admissions had remained the same and only 11 percent claimed that admissions had decreased. According to the PHS, CPDs are most often combined with marijuana, methamphetamine, heroin, and alcohol.

According to data from the *2018-2019 NSDUH*, every state within the Midwest HIDTA region but North Dakota experienced a decrease in pain reliever use over the previous year.<sup>f</sup> Missouri saw the greatest decrease in past year pain reliever use with nearly a 12 percent decrease.

The TEDS data in Table 9 demonstrate a decrease in the number of admissions to drug treatment facilities for a substance use disorder involving prescription opiates in Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and South Dakota between 2015 and 2019. The cause for the decrease in pain reliever inpatient admissions for the TEDS data is unknown at this time. Missouri was the only state in the region reporting an increase in treatment admissions for opiates, which rose 31 percent for the same period. The most recent data is not available for North Dakota.

<sup>f</sup> The NSDUH defined prescription pain relievers as the following subtypes of opioid products: hydrocodone, oxycodone, morphine, pharmaceutical fentanyl, buprenorphine, oxycodone, tramadol, codeine, Demerol, hydromorphone, and methadone.

**Table 9. Treatment Episode Data Sets – Other Opiates**

Treatment Episode Data Sets (TEDS)						
Other Opiates**						
	Iowa	Kansas	Missouri	Nebraska	North Dakota	South Dakota
2015	1,494	413	2,507	523	193	376
2016	1,448	759	2,323	428	350	327
2017	1,257	694	2,227	421	262	371
2018	1,242	570	3,526	364	183	345
2019	1,090	311	3,282	294	N/A	263

\*Other Opiates includes: Demerol, Dilaudid, codeine, methadone, morphine, oxycodone, and any other drug with morphine-like effects.  
SOURCE: Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS). Based on administrative data reported by States to TEDS through February 8, 2021.

#### D. Price

Pricing for diverted CPDs within the Midwest HIDTA region are dependent upon the type of CPD, the dosage, and the regional marketplace. Table 10 illustrates various CPD pricing information for 2020. Benzodiazepine pricing information is available for alprazolam and diazepam. Opioid pricing information is available for hydrocodone, morphine, oxycodone, Percocet, and Vicodin. Stimulant pricing information is available for Adderall and Ritalin.

**Table 10. 2020 Drug Pricing Data– CPDs<sup>45</sup>**

Unit of Measurement	Per Pill	
	Range	Average
Alprazolam (Xanax)	\$1-\$13	\$5
Diazepam (Valium)	\$1-\$5	\$3
Hydrocodone	\$4-\$40	\$14
Morphine	\$5-\$20	\$13
Oxycodone	\$5-\$100	\$22
Percocet	\$5-\$15	\$8
Vicodin	\$2-\$11	\$8
Adderall	\$2-\$10	\$8
Ritalin	\$5-\$10	\$8

#### E. Production

The Midwest HIDTA has not found evidence of CPD diversion from regional pharmaceutical manufacturers at this time. Law enforcement investigations have identified numerous counterfeit CPD operations within the U.S. A significant portion of the counterfeit opioid and benzodiazepine pills encountered by Midwest HIDTA initiatives are found to contain a mixture of fentanyl and other substances when sent to a laboratory for further analysis. Similarly,

many counterfeit stimulant drugs contain methamphetamine rather than the various stimulants they are marketed as.

#### F. Transportation

The Midwest HIDTA found that the region's most popular methods of CPD diversion in 2020 were prescription fraud, theft from family/friends, and doctor shopping. Genuine CPDs encountered by regional law enforcement are produced by pharmaceutical companies and distributed to pharmacies nationwide. Counterfeit CPD manufacturing operations in China, Mexico, Canada, and the United States also contribute to the supply of diverted pharmaceuticals. Counterfeit CPDs clandestinely produced outside of the Midwest HIDTA region are often shipped via mailing services from overseas or smuggled across international borders where they ultimately enter into the region.

## 6. Cocaine

### A. Overview

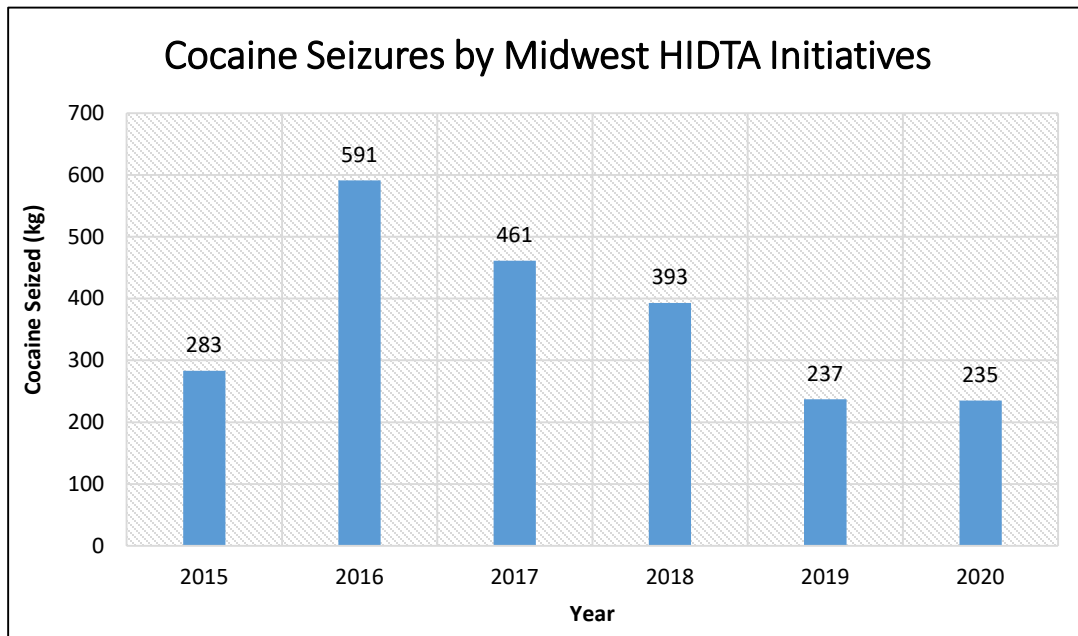
One-third of Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives reported cocaine within their top three greatest drug threats. PHS respondents did not consider cocaine to be a primary drug threat. High levels of violence associated with methamphetamine, marijuana, and heroin/synthetic opioids have made cocaine appear less threatening than in the past.

### B. Availability

The Midwest HIDTA assesses cocaine availability as moderate throughout the region. This is corroborated by the majority (74 percent) of Midwest HIDTA initiatives that reported cocaine as moderately available in their areas. None of the Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives listed a change in the level of cocaine availability, despite cocaine production in Colombia remaining high.<sup>46</sup>

Seizures of cocaine by Midwest HIDTA initiatives in 2020 were virtually identical to 2019, with initiatives seizing 235 kilograms (518 pounds).<sup>47</sup> Cocaine seizures by Midwest HIDTA initiatives from 2015 to 2020 can be found in Figure 15.

**Figure 15. Cocaine Seizures by Midwest HIDTA Initiatives, 2015-2020.<sup>48</sup>**



### C. Use

The Midwest HIDTA assesses cocaine use throughout the region as moderate. Three-quarters (74 percent) of Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives reported moderate levels of cocaine use within their AORs. The majority of PHS respondents described the level of cocaine use as either low (53 percent) or moderate (13 percent). Of the PHS respondents that operate an inpatient or outpatient admissions program, 47 percent reported that admissions for cocaine had remained the same over the past 12 months, although five percent cited an increase. The majority of PHS respondents claimed that young adults (67 percent) and adults (50 percent) most commonly abused cocaine. Cocaine is frequently combined with other substances, the most popular being methamphetamine, heroin and other opioids, and marijuana.

According to the *2018 NSDUH Annual Report*, the number of first time cocaine users nationwide has been steadily decreasing since 2016. This is corroborated by state-level data from the *2018-2019 NSDUH*, which states that estimated cocaine use by those 18 and older decreased in every Midwest HIDTA state but Kansas. Conversely, cocaine use by those 18 and older in Kansas rose 26 percent.

The TEDS data in Table 11 demonstrates a decrease in the number of admissions to drug treatment facilities for a substance use disorder involving cocaine in Iowa, Missouri, and South Dakota between 2015 and 2019. Kansas and Nebraska reported an increase in the number of admissions to drug treatment facilities for a substance use disorder involving cocaine during the same period. The most recent data is not available for North Dakota.

**Table 11. Treatment Episode Data Sets – Cocaine**

Treatment Episode Data Sets (TEDS)						
Cocaine						
	Iowa	Kansas	Missouri	Nebraska	North Dakota	South Dakota
2015	488	203	1,431	156	11	48
2016	425	453	1,345	155	15	49
2017	499	469	1,176	187	37	62
2018	495	355	1,100	185	14	76
2019	405	306	1,014	164	N/A	47

\*SOURCE: Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS). Based on administrative data reported by States to TEDS through February 8, 2021.



#### D. Price

Cocaine prices in the Midwest HIDTA region vary heavily depending on the location. Pricing information from law enforcement initiatives is available in Table 12.

**Table 12. 2020 Drug Pricing Data– Cocaine** <sup>49</sup>

Cocaine		
Unit of Measurement	Range	Average
Kilogram	\$25,000-\$38,000	\$31,536
Ounce	\$794-\$2,000	\$1,334
1/8 Ounce (8-Ball)	\$100-\$532	\$217
Gram	\$25-\$150	\$86
1/10 Gram	\$8-\$50	\$17

#### E. Production

Cocaine is neither cultivated nor produced within the Midwest HIDTA region. The coca plant is native to western South America, which produces the vast majority of the world’s supply of cocaine. According to the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime’s (UNODC) 2020 World Drug Report, global production of cocaine is estimated to have reached the highest level ever in 2018, at 1,723 tons (at a purity of 100 percent).<sup>50</sup> While 2018 is the most recent year for which comparable estimates are available, fiscal year-to-date seizures of cocaine by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) are currently 61 percent (35,446 pounds) of 2020’s total (58,006 pounds). This suggests that there may be increased production of cocaine in coca-producing countries.

#### F. Transportation

The Midwest HIDTA assesses that the majority of U.S.-bound cocaine is transported from South America into Mexico, where it is then smuggled into Midwest region. As with other illicit drug types, cocaine is primarily transported into the region via private passenger vehicles, commercial vehicles, and mailing services. Cocaine trafficking organizations also utilize “go-fast boats” and undersea submersible vehicles to smuggle cocaine into the U.S., though these methods are believed to be used for transporting cocaine to destinations along the eastern and western seaboard.

#### G. Intelligence Gaps

While coca production in South America has record highs, Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives have not reported an increase in cocaine seizures. While the exact reason for this is unknown, analysts within the Midwest HIDTA region posit that international DTOs now send excess cocaine to other markets (e.g. Europe, Australia) where methamphetamine and other stimulants are not in as high of a demand as cocaine.

## 7. New Psychoactive Substances

### A. Overview

The most commonly abused new psychoactive substances (NPSs) in the Midwest HIDTA region are synthetic cannabinoids, synthetic cathinones, and synthetic phenethylamines. NPSs are a class of synthetic substances that mimic the effects of established illicit drugs. Often referred to as “designer drugs”, NPSs have no legitimate industrial or medical uses. Synthetic cannabinoids are typically sprayed onto plant matter or suspended into a liquid and smoked, which are intended to simulate the effects of marijuana. Synthetic cathinones normally reside in powder or crystal form, are either swallowed or insufflated, and are intended to mimic the effects of stimulants. The synthetic phenethylamine drug class possess entactogenic, hallucinogenic, and/or stimulant properties and represent the largest category of designer drugs.

### B. Availability

The Midwest HIDTA assesses NPS availability as moderate to low. Debuting in the late 2000s, NPSs were designed to mimic the effects of marijuana, stimulants, and hallucinogens and were most popular among young adults. Although not as prevalent as they once were, NPSs are still available and are a consistent threat to the Midwest HIDTA region. NPSs are often marketed as bath salts, herbal incense, or research chemicals and are available in head shops or convenience stores. Popular brands of NPSs include K2, Spice, Joker, Black Mamba, Bliss, and Cloud Nine. The majority of Midwest HIDTA initiatives reported NPS availability as moderate (34 percent) to low (38 percent). Midwest HIDTA initiatives seized more than six kilograms (14 pounds) of synthetic cannabinoids in 2020. Synthetic cannabinoid availability has continuously declined across the region due to evolving marijuana laws in states both within and surrounding the Midwest HIDTA region. The availability of high THC marijuana, concentrates, and edibles has increased as a result.

### C. Use

The majority of Midwest HIDTA initiatives reported low levels of NPS use. While NPSs were not a primary contributor to violence and property crimes in the Midwest HIDTA region, some of these drugs have been known to induce violent and/or aggressive behavior.<sup>51 52 53</sup> Approximately 30 percent of law enforcement initiatives reported a moderate level of NPS use in their areas, while the majority (49 percent) described NPS use as low. Similarly, 18 percent of PHS respondents indicated moderate levels of NPS use and 35 percent reported low levels of use. Of the public health respondents that operate a drug treatment program, 42 percent reported that NPS admissions had remained the same over the past 12 months while 11 percent reported an increase. Public health respondents indicated that young adults (50 percent) and adults (38 percent) primarily use NPSs.

NPS abuse comes with many dangers. Product inconsistency poses a serious concern for those who abuse NPSs. For synthetic cannabinoids in particular, batches of “synthetic marijuana”

may vary in potency on a per-bag basis due to the methods that manufacturers use to coat the plant material in the psychoactive chemicals. Manufacturers and retailers of NPSs care little about the chemical makeup of their products, which endangers the physical and mental health of NPS consumers. The lack of quality control endangers the physical and mental health of NPS abusers.

#### D. Price

Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives did not report drug pricing data for NPSs in 2020. According to information from previous years, most establishments (e.g. gas stations, head shops) sell synthetic cannabinoids and cathinones for approximately \$15 to \$20 per gram. Some online vendors offer synthetic cannabinoids suspended in e-juice that can be purchased for a similar price. Sales of synthetic phenethylamines are most prevalent online and vary in price, depending on the formulation and batch purity.

#### E. Production

There were no reports of NPS production within the Midwest HIDTA in 2020. Synthetic cannabinoids are typically produced in foreign laboratories and are purchased by individuals in the U.S. These individuals then spray leafy plant matter with the synthetic cannabinoid solution and package the product. Synthetic cathinones and phenethylamines are often produced in Chinese laboratories where suppliers misrepresent the drug's intended purpose, often describing the drugs as "research chemicals", in order for the drugs to pass customs.

The chemical blueprints and recipes for many NPSs are catalogued in scientific and patent literature. Many of these substances were originally created to be used in medicine, but were abandoned after they failed to meet medical standards. With the exception of phenethylamines, the relative ease of NPS production is possible by the availability of chemical blueprints on the internet. Once a NPS is scheduled as a controlled substance in the U.S. or any other major market, manufacturers will modify the molecular structure of that chemical to avoid legal penalty. This prevents law enforcement agencies from restricting the distribution of the manufacturer's products.

#### F. Transportation

The USPS and other mailing services are the most common methods used to ship NPSs into the Midwest HIDTA region. Semi-trailer trucks and other commercial vehicles are also used to transport NPSs to retailers that offer NPS products.

#### G. Intelligence Gaps

Similar to those of synthetic opioids, overseas manufacturers of NPSs constantly change drug formulations to circumvent drug scheduling laws. As a result, the true extent to which NPSs are present in Midwest HIDTA regional drug mixtures is unknown.

## 8. Other Dangerous Drugs

### A. Overview

A wide variety of other dangerous drugs (ODDs) are abused within Midwest HIDTA region. The threat posed by these drugs in the region is ever-changing due to the development of new synthetic drugs in source countries such as China, as well as resurgences in other drug types, such as “magic” mushrooms. Several types of ODDs are available in the region, including methylenedioxymethamphetamine (MDMA), phencyclidine (PCP), lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD), ketamine, 4-hydroxybutanoic acid (GHB), and psilocybin mushrooms. The breadth of the threat and the variance between areas in the region make it difficult to assess the overall drug threat created by ODDs compared to other drug types. However, only two percent of LES respondents ranked ODDs within the top three drug threats in their AORs. Only one PHS respondent listed ODDs as their greatest drug threat.

### B. Availability

The Midwest HIDTA assesses the availability of ODDs across the region as moderate to low. This is supported by the 49 percent of law enforcement initiatives that reported ODD availability as low and 40 percent that reported availability as moderate. Although ODDs drugs have existed within the Midwest HIDTA region for decades, their availability has historically remained moderate to low. ODDs are typically purchased at bars, nightclubs, music festivals, or online and are generally more difficult to obtain compared to drugs such as cocaine or marijuana.

Midwest HIDTA initiatives seized 887 dosage units of ketamine, 7,342 dosage units of LSD, and 1,028 grams of PCP in 2020. Initiatives also seized 23,886 dosage units and more than two kilograms (five pounds) of MDMA in 2020. Thirty-four kilograms (75 pounds) of “magic” mushrooms (hereafter referred to simply as “mushrooms”) were seized in 2020, more than three times the amount seized in 2019. This surge is not unique to the Midwest HIDTA region, as seizures of mushrooms have exploded nationally over the past year. Though the reason for the increase is unknown, seizures of mushrooms within the Midwest HIDTA region have closely tracked those of the U.S. for the past five years.

### C. Use

While not as popular as other drugs of abuse, ODD use in the Midwest HIDTA region is low but consistent. According to 50 percent of LES respondents and 35 percent of PHS respondents claimed that ODDs have low levels of use within their AORs. Public health respondents claim that young adults and adults primary abuse ODDs. The majority of public health respondents (42 percent) stated that inpatient/outpatient admissions for ODDs remained the same over the past 12 months.

The TEDS data in Table 13 depicts the low levels of PCP abuse across the Midwest HIDTA region between 2015 and 2019. Inpatient admissions increased in Iowa, Kansas, Nebraska, and

South Dakota between 2015 and 2019, while admissions decreased in Missouri. The most recent data is not available for North Dakota.

**Table 13. Treatment Episode Data Sets – PCP**

Treatment Episode Data Sets (TEDS)						
PCP						
	Iowa	Kansas	Missouri	Nebraska	North Dakota	South Dakota
2015	8	17	202	12	0	1
2016	7	54	191	12	0	1
2017	10	45	161	9	0	0
2018	9	35	155	6	0	1
2019	11	22	128	13	N/A	2

SOURCE: Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS). Based on administrative data reported by States to TEDS through February 8, 2021.

#### D. Price

The price of ODDs varies depending on the purity, location, and ingredients. The price of MDMA in the Midwest HIDTA region varied between \$1 and \$35 per capsule. The price per gram of MDMA ranged from \$50 to \$120. The price per dosage unit of LSD varied between \$2 and \$11. The price per gram of PCP ranged between \$30 and \$40. The price vial of PCP ranged between \$140 and \$150.

#### E. Production

Most MDMA seized in the U.S. is primarily synthesized in Canada and the Netherlands.<sup>54</sup> LSD may be produced in clandestine laboratories across the country, although a crucial precursor chemical, known as ergotamine tartrate, is not readily available in the U.S. Ketamine is commercially produced in a number of countries, including the U.S., and is diverted or stolen from legitimate sources. PCP destined for the Midwest HIDTA region is typically manufactured in clandestine laboratories in Southern California.

#### F. Transportation

The Midwest HIDTA assesses that the majority of the region's MDMA is sourced from foreign countries, such as Canada and the Netherlands. PCP is transported into the region from clandestine laboratories in Southern California. Ketamine is typically diverted from veterinary clinics and other medical sources within the U.S. and transported into the region.

#### G. Intelligence Gaps

It is possible that the surge in mushroom seizures, experienced by both the Midwest HIDTA region and the U.S. as a whole, is associated with the mushroom decriminalization and/or

legalization efforts in several states and cities. With the penalties for cultivating mushrooms reduced and/or abolished in specific areas, it is a very real possibility that criminals will export mushrooms grown in “legal” areas to other areas throughout the U.S., similar to “recreational” and/or “medical” marijuana.

The Midwest HIDTA has identified several instances of drug traffickers marketing methamphetamine as either MDMA or ecstasy pills. With high levels of methamphetamine availability across the region, it is likely that this occurs at a much higher rate than it is detected, though the true extent is unknown.

## **9. Source Considerations**

Several sources were considered in the preparation of the drug threat section of the 2021 Midwest HIDTA Threat Assessment. Statistics from the Midwest HIDTA PMP aided the section by quantifying the volume, type, and prices of drugs seized. Survey responses from our law enforcement initiatives and public health partners via the 2021 LES and PHS identified the drugs most used and abused in the region. Data derived from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration’s (SAMHSA) National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) provided insight on regional drug use rates. Data collected from SAMHSA’s Treatment Episode Data Sets (TEDS) illustrated the number of individuals seeking treatment for various substance use disorders. Anecdotal information such as HIDTA task force phone interviews, news media reports, law enforcement agency websites, and official press releases proved useful in highlighting specific drug threat issues.

## V. Drug Trafficking Organizations

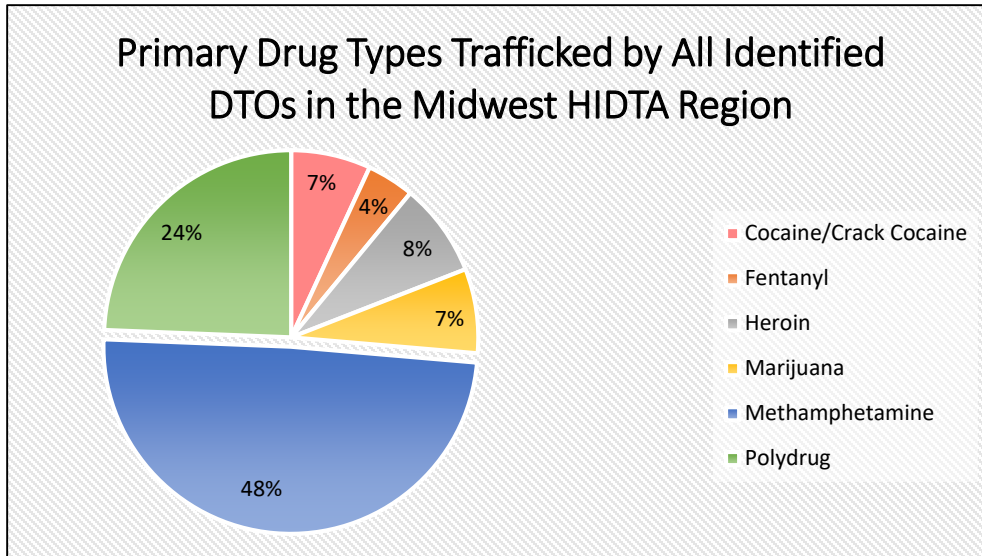
### 1. Overview

The Midwest HIDTA assesses that Mexican DTOs pose the greatest drug trafficking threat to the Midwest region. In the recent past, the vast majority of drug investigations involved a trafficker that was, to use a pop culture analogy, “six degrees of separation” from a Mexican drug cartel. This was based on the various levels of compartmentation between street dealers, distribution networks, and Mexico-based drug sources. This degree of separation is now often assessed at two, as Mexican cartels control the production, transportation, and wholesale—even retail level—distribution of illicit drugs in the United States.<sup>55</sup> As early as 2011, Mexican cartels have established a network of drug trafficking cells operating in at least 1,286 cities and towns across the U.S. utilizing a dynamic command and control structure.<sup>56 57</sup> Because of this evolution of Mexican cartel dominance and pervasiveness throughout the nation, drug investigations of all types now directly link to one of the major Mexican TCOs.

Midwest HIDTA enforcement initiatives documented 770 DTOs operating within the region in 2020, with 7,733 members and 1,178 leaders identified.<sup>58</sup> Mexico-sourced DTOs continue to have the most significant impact in the region. The average identified membership of a DTO was approximately 10 individuals; of which, eight were members and two were leaders. Midwest HIDTA-based DTOs operate in both urban and rural areas and vary in terms of size, structure, and trafficking activities. Approximately 34 percent of LES respondents noted the movement of large metropolitan gangs (e.g. Bloods, Crips) from major cities into smaller more rural areas. However, neighborhood-based street gangs dominate violence related to drug trafficking in most areas of the Midwest HIDTA region. These groups, which are comprised of individuals that reside on a shared street or locality, are difficult to identify because they lack the traditional hierarchy associated with nationally-affiliated gangs and frequently disband and regroup. While methamphetamine constitutes the majority of single-drug DTOs, it is evident that an increasing number of DTOs are expanding into poly-drug distribution.

Missouri contains both the largest population and most initiatives of any state in the Midwest HIDTA region. As such, Missouri reported more methamphetamine trafficking organizations than any other state, accounting for 32 percent of all methamphetamine trafficking organizations. Missouri also identified the highest percentage of fentanyl (74 percent), heroin (41 percent), marijuana (44 percent), and cocaine (41 percent) trafficking organizations operating in the region. North Dakota initiatives identified the highest percentage of oxycodone trafficking organizations in the region, accounting for 83 percent of the region’s total. Figure 16 depicts the primary drug types trafficked by all DTOs within the Midwest HIDTA region in 2020.

**Figure 16. Primary Drug Types Trafficked by All DTOs Identified as Operating in the Midwest HIDTA Region.<sup>59</sup>**



Of the 770 DTOs operating within the Midwest HIDTA region, 11 percent were international in scope, 55 percent were multi-state, and 34 percent were local. Appendix VII summarizes key characteristics of all identified DTOs in 2020, while Appendix VIII includes a summary table for DTOs identified as operating in each state of the Midwest HIDTA region. According to 2020 data from the PMP, 39 percent of all DTOs identified by Midwest HIDTA initiatives were identified as being violent, posing a significant threat throughout the region. Forty-five percent of international DTOs operating in the Midwest HIDTA region were identified as being violent, compared to 33 percent of multi-state and 43 percent of local DTOs. A state-by-state review of violent DTOs identified by Midwest HIDTA initiatives may be found in Table 14.

**Table 14. Violent DTOs Identified by Midwest HIDTA Initiatives.<sup>60</sup>**

Violent DTOs identified by Midwest HIDTA Initiatives			
	Total DTOs	Violent DTOs	Violent DTOs (%)
Illinois	29	5	17%
Iowa	123	19	15%
Kansas	52	25	48%
Missouri	314	200	64%
Nebraska	128	34	27%
North Dakota	63	8	13%
South Dakota	61	7	11%
<b>All Initiatives</b>	<b>770</b>	<b>298</b>	<b>39%</b>



The states with the highest percentage of violent DTOs also had the highest percentage of gang-related DTOs, indicating a direct correlation between gangs and violence in the region. Forty-five percent of the DTOs identified by Midwest HIDTA initiatives in Missouri were gang-related, the highest percentage for any state in the region.

DTOs in the Midwest HIDTA region utilize novel technologies to facilitate communication, obtain payment, and monitor courier location. These platforms include the dark web, social media, messaging systems available through gaming systems, portable GPS systems, and secure communications apps available through mobile devices. Many of the apps utilized by DTOs in the region have now implemented end-to-end encryption. Apps with end-to-end encryption, such as WhatsApp, provide an investigative hurdle to law enforcement due to the encryption aspect inherent in their infrastructure. Apps identified by Midwest HIDTA initiatives as being most utilized in the region include Facebook messenger, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Signal, and Telegram. Cryptocurrency, usually concurrent with dark web use, is used by some DTOs to transfer drug proceeds into and outside of the Midwest HIDTA region. The use of complex technology by DTOs in the region is expected to increase in the future.

## 2. International Drug Trafficking Organizations

### A. Overview

The Midwest HIDTA assesses that Mexican DTOs and other DTOs of Hispanic origin pose the greatest international drug trafficking threat to the Midwest HIDTA. A total of 83 international DTOs were identified as operating in the Midwest HIDTA region in 2020, with 164 leaders and 899 members.<sup>61</sup> Table 15 lists the characteristics of international DTOs identified by Midwest HIDTA initiatives in 2020. Mexico and Colombia were the primary countries affiliated with the identified international DTOs. On average, there were 11 members per international DTO. Approximately 57 percent of the international DTOs targeted in 2020 consisted of two or more ethnic groups, with Hispanic cited most frequently. Twenty-eight percent of the international DTOs trafficked more than one drug type. The percentage of international DTOs reported as violent by Midwest HIDTA initiatives slightly less in 2020 than in 2019, as were the percentage of DTOs with documented ties to gangs.

**Table 15. International DTOs Identified as Operating in the Midwest HIDTA.**<sup>62</sup>

<b>International DTOs Identified by Midwest HIDTA Initiatives</b>	
<b>Characteristics</b>	
Total International DTOs	83
- Hispanic	68
Total Members (Leaders)	899 (164)
Average DTO Size	10.83
Multi-ethnic	47
Gang Related	29
Violent	37
Poly-drug	23
Money Laundering Activities	25
<b>Federal Case Designations</b>	
OCDETF	22
CPOT	4
RPOT	2
PTO	21

### B. Affiliations and Membership

The Sinaloa, New Generation Jalisco Cartel (CJNG), Gulf Cartel, Juarez Cartel, and various factions of the Los Zetas Cartel exert the most influence over Mexican DTOs operating within the Midwest HIDTA. PMP data indicates that 58 percent of international DTOs that operated within the Midwest HIDTA region in 2020 were of Mexican origin. Similarly, 89 percent of Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives indicated that international DTOs operated within their AORs. Of those same respondents, 93 percent listed Mexico as the primary country affiliated with those DTOs.<sup>63</sup>

With their larger scope of operations, international DTOs generally have higher numbers of identified membership than multi-state or local DTOs. The targeted disruption and dismantlement of international DTOs requires a high level of cooperation and coordination amongst HIDTA initiatives, law enforcement task forces, and law enforcement agencies. Thus, investigations targeting the illicit activities of international DTOs often result in a larger number of identified DTO members and leaders. International DTOs operating within the Midwest HIDTA region have an average of 11 identified members, which is typically larger than that of multi-state or local DTOs.

Forty-eight percent of international DTOs operating in the Midwest HIDTA region were described as violent. According to law enforcement initiatives, violence associated to international DTOs operating in the region is directly related to their associations with violent Mexico-based drug cartels. Mexican cartels have significant influence over the region's drug trafficking activities. The Sinaloa cartel is the most prevalent cartel in the region and is involved in international, multi-state, and local DTOs. Likewise, the *2020 National Drug Threat Assessment*, published by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), indicated the Sinaloa cartel is among the most influential and pervasive Mexican cartels operating within the Midwest HIDTA region.<sup>64</sup> The Sinaloa cartel serves as a source of supply for multiple drug types in the Midwest HIDTA region, including cocaine, fentanyl, heroin, marijuana, and methamphetamine. The Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generación (CJNG), Gulf Cartel, Juarez Cartel, and various factions of the Los Zetas Cartel are responsible for the majority of remaining drug trafficking activity in the Midwest HIDTA region. The CJNG is based in the Mexican state of Jalisco and distributes large quantities of methamphetamine, fentanyl, heroin, and cocaine.<sup>65</sup> The Los Zetas and Cartel del Noreste—the most prominent faction of the Los Zetas Cartel—are based in northeastern Mexico and traffic a variety of illicit drugs through the southwest border of the U.S.<sup>66</sup> The Juarez drug cartel is based in the Mexican state of Chihuahua and is primarily involved in the trafficking of heroin, methamphetamine, marijuana, and cocaine.<sup>67</sup> Table 16 lists the major Mexican cartel threats to the Midwest HIDTA region in 2020.

**Table 16. Mexican Cartel Threats to the Midwest HIDTA Region**<sup>68</sup>

<b>Cartel Threats to the Midwest HIDTA, According to Law Enforcement Initiatives</b>	
<b>Primary Cartel Threats</b>	<b>Secondary Cartel Threats</b>
Sinaloa Cartel	Juarez Cartel
Cartel Jalisco Nueva Generacion (CJNG)	Los Caballeros Templarios (Knights Templar Cartel)
Gulf Cartel	Beltran Leyva Organization (BLO)
Los Zetas(various factions)	National Liberation Army (Colombia)

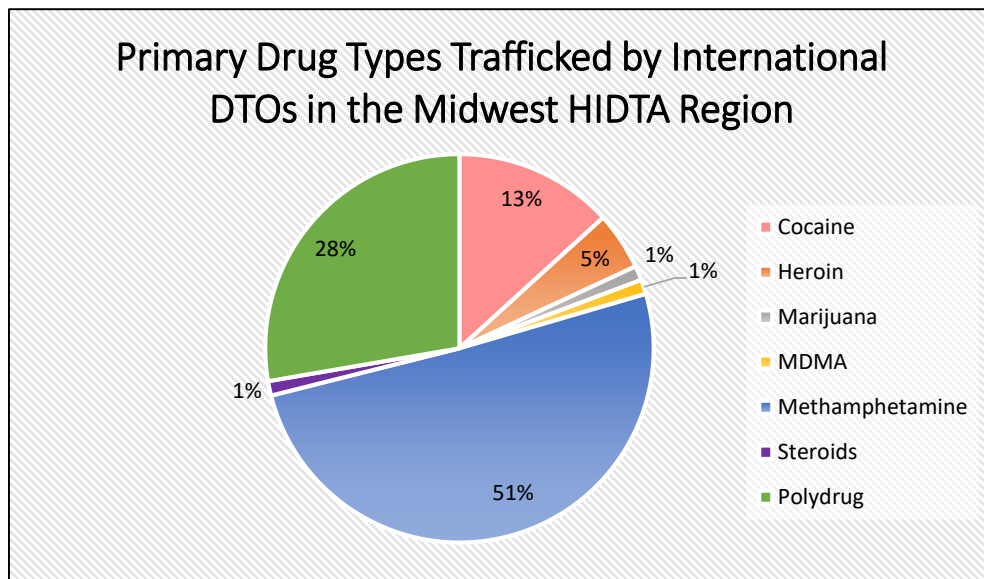
In addition to Mexican cartels, 35 percent of international DTOs within the Midwest HIDTA region have documented affiliations with gangs. The Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, Mexican Mafia, MS-13, and Sureños street gangs have all been identified by law enforcement initiatives as participating in drug trafficking activities with international DTOs in the Midwest region. The Hells Angels, Bandidos, El Foresteros, Mongols, Outlaws, Pharaohs, Tribesman, and Sons of Silence outlaw motorcycle groups were also identified by initiatives as coordinating drug trafficking activities with international DTOs in the region.

### C. Activities and Methods

Seventy percent of the Midwest HIDTA region's international DTOs engaged in money laundering activities, according to law enforcement initiatives. The top two money laundering methods utilized by international DTOs in the region are bulk cash smuggling and money remittances. Seventy percent of initiatives indicated that bulk cash smuggling was used at a high level by international DTOs, while 47 percent indicated that money remittances were highly utilized.

Twenty-eight percent of all international DTOs within the Midwest HIDTA region were poly-drug trafficking organizations. Most of these poly-drug DTOs trafficked methamphetamine and/or cocaine. Seventy-five percent of international DTOs trafficked methamphetamine, including both single and poly-drug DTOs. Other primary drug types trafficked by international DTOs in the Midwest HIDTA region include cocaine (35 percent), heroin (22 percent) and marijuana (10 percent), as well as various synthetics (including fentanyl, MDMA, and anabolic steroids). Figure 17 shows the primary drug types trafficked by international DTOs identified as operating in the Midwest HIDTA region.

**Figure 17. Primary Drug Types Trafficked by International DTOs Identified as Operating in the Midwest HIDTA Region.<sup>69</sup>**



### 3. Multi-State Drug Trafficking Organizations

#### A. Overview

Multi-state DTOs are the most common DTO type encountered by Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives. A total of 424 multi-state DTOs were identified as operating in the Midwest HIDTA region in 2020.<sup>70</sup> According to 41 percent of law enforcement initiatives, California was the state most connected to multi-state DTOs. Arizona, Colorado, and Texas were the other states most closely tied to multi-state DTOs in the region. Midwest HIDTA initiatives identified 602 leaders and 4,223 other members. According to 69 percent of law enforcement initiatives, at least one multi-state DTO within their AOR had a connection to a Mexican cartel.<sup>71</sup> This connection typically involves the use of a cartel member as a source of supply. Table 17 shows the characteristics of multi-state DTOs identified as operating in the Midwest HIDTA region in 2020.

*Table 17. Multi-State DTOs Identified as Operating in the Midwest HIDTA Region.*<sup>72</sup>

<b>Multi-State DTOs Identified by Midwest HIDTA Initiatives</b>	
<b>Characteristics</b>	
Total Multi-State DTOs	424
- California	113
- Illinois	74
- Iowa	45
- Arizona	43
- Colorado	39
- Missouri	37
- Texas	28
Total Members (Leaders)	2,223 (602)
Average DTO Size	9.95
Multi-ethnic	201
Gang Related	95
Violent	147
Poly-drug	108
Money Laundering Activities	55
<b>Federal Case Designations</b>	
OCDETF	52
CPOT	6
RPOT	1
PTO	53

## B. Affiliations and Membership

Reporting by Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives indicates that more than two-thirds were affiliated with Mexican cartels. The Sinaloa cartel has the strongest nexus to multi-state DTOs in the region. Other cartels that are affiliated with multi-state DTOs include the CJNG, Gulf, and Juarez Cartels. Los Zetas, BLO, and Knights Templar Cartels were also connected to multi-state DTOs, though to lesser amounts. The BLO is based in the Mexican states of Guerrero, Morelos, Nayarit, and Sinaloa and is primarily involved in the trafficking of marijuana, cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine.<sup>73</sup>

Multi-state DTOs in the Midwest HIDTA region have an average of 10 members per organization, including one leader and nine additional members. This is slightly lower than the average identified membership of both the local and international DTOs that operate in the region. PMP data states that 34 percent of multi-state DTOs in the Midwest HIDTA region were identified as violent and that 22 percent have connections to gangs. A higher percentage of multi-state DTOs were identified by initiatives in Missouri as being either violent (62 percent) or associated with gangs (42 percent) than any other state in the region. According to law enforcement initiatives, multi-state DTOs operating in the region are linked to nationally-affiliated street gangs such as the Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, and Vice Lords. They are also linked to outlaw motorcycle gangs including the Bandidos, Galloping Goose, Hells Angels, Outlaws, and Sons of Silence.

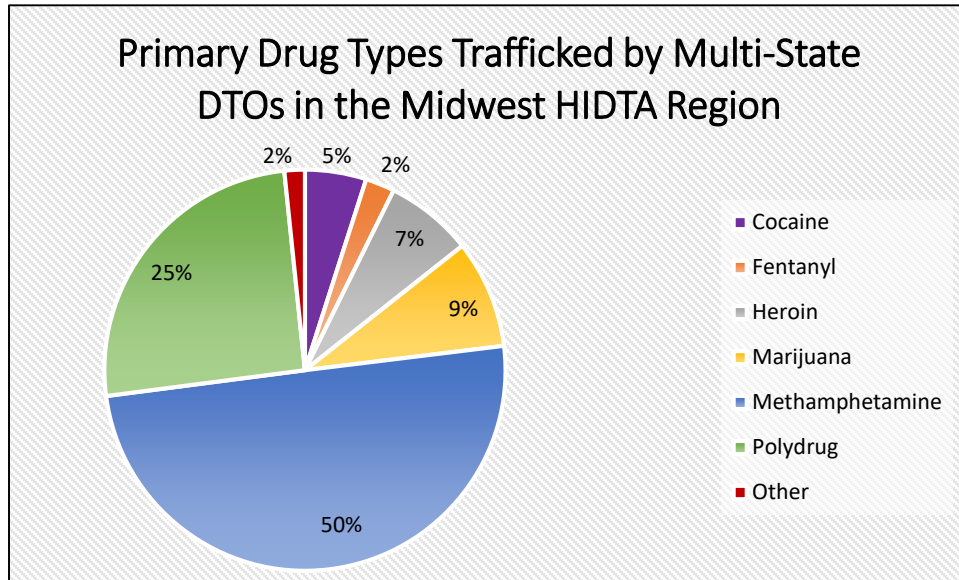
## C. Activities and Methods

Although only 13 percent of multi-state DTOs were identified through PMP data as conducting money laundering activities, 69 percent of law enforcement initiatives reported that multi-state DTOs within their AOR conducted money laundering activities. This suggests that an increasing number of DTOs engage in money laundering activities. Similar to international DTOs, the top money laundering methods utilized by multi-state DTOs in the Midwest HIDTA region are bulk cash smuggling and money remittances. Nearly three-quarters of initiatives indicated that multi-state DTOs used bulk cash smuggling at a high level and 48 percent indicated multi-state DTOs in their AORs use money remittances at a high level.

Twenty-five percent of multi-state DTOs operating in the region were identified as poly-drug trafficking organizations. Methamphetamine trafficking organizations accounted for 50 percent of multi-state DTOs operating in the Midwest HIDTA region, the highest percentage of any drug type. Other primary drug types trafficked by multi-state DTOs operating in the region include marijuana (eight percent), heroin (seven percent), cocaine (five percent), and fentanyl (two percent). Unsurprisingly, multi-state DTOs are responsible for more marijuana trafficking than any other DTO type. Most of the supply of marijuana in the Midwest HIDTA region is transported into the region from Western states with “recreational” and “medical” marijuana programs (e.g.

California, Colorado). Figure 18 shows the primary drug types trafficked by multi-state DTOs identified as operating in the Midwest HIDTA region.

**Figure 18. Primary Drug Types Trafficked by Multi-State DTOs Identified as Operating in the Midwest HIDTA Region.<sup>74</sup>**



## 4. Local Drug Trafficking Organizations

### A. Overview

Local DTOs were the second most encountered DTO type encountered by Midwest HIDTA law enforcement initiatives. A total of 263 local DTOs were identified as operating in the Midwest HIDTA region in 2020.<sup>75</sup> Of the local DTOs, Midwest HIDTA initiatives identified 412 leaders and 2,611 members. Approximately 53 percent of initiatives indicated that local DTOs within their AORs are known to have connections to Mexican drug cartels.<sup>76</sup> As with all other DTO types, the Sinaloa cartel is most often connected to local DTOs cases. Other cartels associated with local DTOs as reported by initiatives were the CJNG, Juarez Cartel, Gulf Cartel, Los Zetas, the Knights Templar, and the BLO. Table 18 lists the traits of local DTOs within the Midwest HIDTA region in 2020.

**Table 18. Local DTOs Identified as Operating in the Midwest HIDTA Region.<sup>77</sup>**

Local DTOs Identified by Midwest HIDTA Initiatives	
Characteristics	
Total Local DTOs	263
Total Members (Leaders)	2,611 (412)
Average DTO Size	9.9
Multi-ethnic	97
Gang Related	82
Violent	114
Poly-drug	53
Money Laundering Activities	27
Federal Case Designations	
OCDETF	13
CPOT	1
RPOT	0
PTO	21

### B. Affiliations and Membership

Local DTOs operate within each state of the Midwest HIDTA region. Ninety-six percent of law enforcement initiatives indicated that local DTOs were operating within their AORs. Midwest HIDTA initiatives identified 2,611 members and 412 leaders belonging to local DTOs, with an average of 9.9 members per organization.

More than half (53 percent) of Midwest HIDTA initiatives reported that local DTOs within their AOR were affiliated with Mexican drug cartels. The Sinaloa Cartel and the CNJG were the most cited Mexican cartels affiliated with local DTOs. Other cartels affiliated with local DTOs include the Juarez Cartel, the Gulf Cartel, Los Zetas, the Knights Templar, and the BLO.



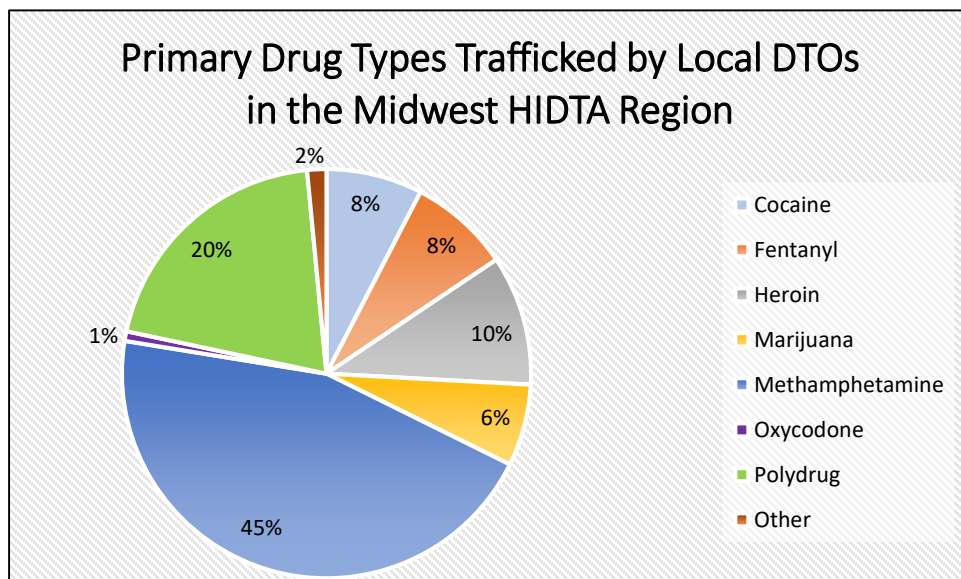
According to data from the PMP, 43 percent of local DTOs operating in the Midwest HIDTA region were identified as violent. Thirty-one percent of local DTOs had connections to street and outlaw motorcycle gangs. Local DTOs based in Missouri were affiliated with more violence and gang activity than any other state in the Midwest HIDTA region. According to data from the PMP, local DTOs coordinated criminal activities with nationally-affiliated street gangs such as the Bloods, Crips, and Gangster Disciples. Furthermore, many local DTOs collaborate with localized street gangs that have no national affiliation. These neighborhood-based street gangs are believed to have greater nexus to drug trafficking and violence in the Midwest HIDTA region than nationally-affiliated street gangs. El Foresteros, Galloping Goose, and Saddle Tramps OMGs are believed to be affiliated with local DTOs within the Midwest HIDTA region.

### C. Activities and Methods

Similar to the PMP results for other DTO types, only six percent of local DTOs within the Midwest HIDTA region were connected to money laundering activities. However, 64 percent of LES respondents stated that local DTOs within their AORs engaged in money laundering activities. Bulk cash smuggling, money remittances, and comingling illicit income with legitimate business income were the top money laundering methods utilized by local DTOs.

Methamphetamine trafficking organizations accounted for 45 percent of local DTOs operating in the Midwest HIDTA region. Twenty percent of local DTOs were identified by Midwest HIDTA initiatives as poly-drug trafficking organizations. Other primary drug types trafficked by local DTOs include heroin (10 percent), fentanyl (eight percent), cocaine (eight percent), and marijuana (six percent). Figure 19 shows the primary drug types trafficked by local DTOs identified as operating in the Midwest HIDTA region.

**Figure 19. Primary Drug Types Trafficked by Local DTOs Identified as Operating in the Midwest HIDTA Region.<sup>78</sup>**



## 5. Intelligence Gaps

The ways and means in which Mexican drug cartels and other DTOs recruit drivers to transport their products—both domestically and internationally—are not fully understood by the Midwest HIDTA at this time. More specifically, it is unknown if DTOs intentionally seek out certain groups of people to transport their drugs or what methods (e.g. Facebook, WhatsApp, etc.) are used to recruit drivers.

Money laundering activities conducted by Midwest HIDTA-based DTOs may be underrepresented in the PMP. The Midwest HIDTA used other resources, such as the LES, to provide a more complete assessment of the extent to which international, multi-state, and local DTOs engage in money laundering activities.

Information related to cartel associations with Midwest HIDTA-based DTOs is unconfirmed and is periodically obtained through interviews of unreliable sources. The full extent to which international, multi-state, and local DTOs are involved with street gangs and outlaw motorcycle gangs is unknown. Information regarding gang involvement is sourced mainly through confidential sources and criminal interviews.

## 6. Source Considerations

There were several sources consulted in the development of the DTO section of the 2021 Midwest HIDTA Threat Assessment. Specifically, these sources include Midwest HIDTA PMP data, law enforcement initiative responses to the 2021 LES, Midwest HIDTA task force commander interviews, the DEA's 2020 National Drug Threat Assessment, and the National Drug Intelligence Center's 2011 National Drug Threat Assessment.

## VI. Money Laundering Organizations

### A. Overview

Two money laundering organizations (MLOs) were identified within the Midwest HIDTA region in 2020, according to PMP data. Most DTOs operating in the Midwest HIDTA region conduct their own money laundering activities without the use of separate and distinct MLOs. Only 11 percent of LES respondents claimed that MLOs existed within their AOR which were not a part of a DTO. Of that 11 percent that claimed the presence of an MLO within their AORs, two were described as international in scope and four were described as multi-state. Similarly, three respondents claimed the presence of local MLOs within their AORs.<sup>79</sup>

Bulk cash smuggling, money remittances, online payment systems (e.g. CashApp, Venmo), prepaid cards, and the comingling of illicit proceeds with legitimate income were the most-utilized money laundering techniques by Midwest HIDTA-based MLOs. In addition to drug trafficking income, some MLOs reportedly laundered the proceeds from firearms trafficking and thefts of various goods.

**Table 19. Money Laundering Organizations Identified as Operating in the Midwest HIDTA Region, according to 2020 PMP Data.<sup>80</sup>**

<b>Money Laundering Organizations Identified by Midwest HIDTA Initiatives</b>			
<b>Total Identified</b>	<b>International</b>	<b>Multi-State</b>	<b>Local</b>
<i>2</i>	<i>0</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>1</i>

### B. Affiliations and Membership

Mexico was the primary country affiliated with international MLOs; more specifically, the Mexican states of Chihuahua and Sinaloa. China and Columbia were also affiliated with international DTOs, but to a lesser extent. Initiatives reported that the international MLOs were linked to Mexican drug cartels, primarily the Sinaloa and Juarez Cartels. While one multi-state MLO was reported in the PMP, its source state was unknown. Of the four initiative responses to the LES that reported the presence of multi-state MLOs in their areas, Texas and California were the top affiliated states. These groups allegedly have ties to Sinaloa, Gulf, and Juarez Cartels. One Midwest HIDTA initiative reported that an MLO in their AOR had ties to a local Crip-affiliated street gang. The initiative stated that the gang sold narcotics at the street level and passed the proceeds on to an MLO that would launder the money.

### C. Activities and Methods

MLOs operating within the Midwest HIDTA region often use the same methods and trafficking routes for money laundering as DTOs do for drug trafficking. The heavy utilization of bulk currency smuggling, money remittances, prepaid cards, and the comingling of illicit funds

with legitimate business by the region's MLOs corroborate this. MLOs capitalize on the Midwest HIDTA region's extensive interstate system by smuggling large volumes of cash to criminal elements across or outside of the region using privately owned or commercial vehicles on interstates or U.S. highways. Money remittance services are also highly utilized, with individuals in the Midwest HIDTA region transferring proceeds from illicit activity to their associates in foreign countries. These organizations also establish business fronts to launder illicit proceeds through. These businesses may be entirely fraudulent or may commingle illicit proceeds with that of legitimate business. High cash businesses like convenience stores are generally favored by DTOs when laundering drug proceeds in the Midwest HIDTA region. Both DTOs and MLOs also use casinos to launder money, though typically in smaller amounts (i.e. structuring) to avoid transaction reports.

#### **D. Intelligence Gaps**

Because their primary mission is to disrupt and dismantle DTOs in the region, Midwest HIDTA initiatives may not focus significantly on targeting MLOs in the region and may be unaware of a MLO presence in their AORs. For example, when asked whether MLOs that are separate and distinct from DTOs operate in their AORs, 77 percent of LES respondents indicated "Unknown." As the drug component of any DTO/MLO investigation remains the primary concern, in-depth financial investigations may be underutilized.

The frequency for which cryptocurrencies and digital payment services (e.g. Venmo, Zelle, etc.) are used in money laundering activities are unknown at this time.

#### **E. Source Considerations**

There were several sources consulted in the development of the MLO section of the 2021 Midwest HIDTA Threat Assessment. Specifically, these sources include Midwest HIDTA PMP data, law enforcement initiative responses to the 2021 LES, and Midwest HIDTA task force commander interviews.

## VII. Drug-Related Overdose Fatalities in the Midwest HIDTA Region

### 1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) WONDER Data

Data collected from the CDC WONDER database illustrates that the Midwest HIDTA region experienced a three percent increase in drug-related overdose fatalities from 2018 to 2019, the most recent year for which data is available.<sup>81</sup> There was a seven percent increase in drug overdose deaths across the U.S. as a whole during the same period. States within the Midwest HIDTA region reported 2,584 drug overdose deaths in 2019, up from 2,507 in 2018. South Dakota experienced the most significant rise in drug overdose deaths in the region during this time, an increase of approximately 39 percent. Table 20 displays information on drug overdose deaths in the Midwest HIDTA region in 2018 and 2019. The Midwest HIDTA utilized CDC WONDER data in this section because overdose death data reporting is not standardized across the states, which makes it difficult to accurately compare one state to another. Table 20 shows the change in the number of drug overdose deaths across the Midwest HIDTA region from 2018 to 2019.

**Table 20. Drug Overdose Deaths in the Midwest HIDTA Region, 2018 and 2019.<sup>82</sup>**

<b>Drug Overdose Deaths in the Midwest HIDTA Region, 2018 and 2019</b>			
	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Percent Change from 2018 to 2019</b>
Iowa	287	357	+ 24.4 percent
Kansas	345	382	+ 10.7 percent
Missouri	1,610	1,573	- 2.3 percent
Nebraska	138	125	- 9.4 percent
North Dakota	70	69	- 1.4 percent
South Dakota	57	78	+ 36.8 percent
<b>All Midwest HIDTA states</b>	<b>2,507</b>	<b>2,584</b>	<b>+ 3.1 percent</b>

Cocaine overdose death data was not available for every state within the region. As a result, the percentage change for 2018 and 2019 represents only Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri. All three of these states reported an increase in the number of cocaine-related overdose deaths.

**Table 21. Cocaine Overdose Deaths in the Midwest HIDTA Region, 2018 and 2019.<sup>83</sup>**

<b>Cocaine Overdose Deaths in the Midwest HIDTA Region, 2018 and 2019</b>			
	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Percent Change from 2018 to 2019</b>
Iowa	14	24	+ 71.4 percent
Kansas	33	37	+ 12.1 percent
Missouri	163	180	+ 10.4 percent
Nebraska	N/A	N/A	N/A
North Dakota	N/A	N/A	N/A
South Dakota	N/A	N/A	N/A
<b>All Midwest HIDTA states</b>	<b>210</b>	<b>276</b>	<b>+ 31.4 percent</b>

\*These numbers reflect ICD-10 code T40.5

Deaths involving psychostimulants have increased 38 percent across the Midwest HIDTA region from 2018 to 2019 and 164 percent from 2015 to 2018.<sup>84</sup> Although methamphetamine does not have its own ICD-10 code and is combined within the psychostimulant category, deaths from methamphetamine are expected to continue rising with the increase in users and the increase in co-use with opioids. Table 22 shows the change in psychostimulant overdose deaths across the Midwest HIDTA region from 2018 to 2019.

**Table 22. Psychostimulant Overdose Deaths in the Midwest HIDTA Region, 2018 and 2019.<sup>85</sup>**

<b>Psychostimulant Overdose Deaths in the Midwest HIDTA Region, 2018 and 2019</b>			
	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Percent Change from 2018 to 2019</b>
Iowa	133	209	+ 57.1 percent
Kansas	114	198	+ 73.7 percent
Missouri	461	552	+ 19.7 percent
Nebraska	37	55	+ 48.6 percent
North Dakota	24	31	+ 29.2 percent
South Dakota	16	34	+ 112.5 percent
<b>All Midwest HIDTA states</b>	<b>785</b>	<b>1,079</b>	<b>+ 37.5 percent</b>
*These numbers reflect ICD-10 code T43.6 and include: Adderall (dextroamphetamine), Ritalin (methylphenidate), and other amphetamine-type stimulants (methamphetamine, etc.)			

Opioid overdose deaths for the entire Midwest HIDTA region increased four percent from 2018 to 2019.<sup>86</sup> The number of opioid overdose deaths increased in Iowa, Kansas, North Dakota, and South Dakota. South Dakota experienced the greatest rise in opioid overdose deaths with an increase of 64 percent. Missouri and Nebraska were the only states within the Midwest HIDTA region to report a decrease in opioid overdose deaths. Table 23 shows information on opioid overdose deaths in the Midwest HIDTA region from 2018 and 2019.

**Table 23. Opioid Overdose Deaths in the Midwest HIDTA Region, 2018 and 2019.<sup>87</sup>**

<b>Opioid Overdose Deaths in the Midwest HIDTA Region, 2018 and 2019</b>			
	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Percent Change from 2018 to 2019</b>
Iowa	143	170	+ 18.9 percent
Kansas	156	196	+ 25.6 percent
Missouri	1,132	1,121	- 1.0 percent
Nebraska	48	31	- 35.4 percent
North Dakota	36	38	+ 5.6 percent
South Dakota	28	46	+ 64.3 percent
<b>All Midwest HIDTA states</b>	<b>1,543</b>	<b>1,602</b>	<b>+ 3.8 percent</b>
*These numbers reflect ICD-10 codes T40.0-T40.4, T40.6.			

The CDC estimates that 70 percent of all drug overdose deaths nationwide involve opioids.<sup>88</sup> Using the most recent CDC WONDER data, the Midwest HIDTA assesses that the

regional increase in drug overdose deaths is primarily attributable to psychostimulant and opioid abuse. The increasing availability and potency of both psychostimulants and synthetic opioids in the Midwest HIDTA has significantly contributed to both fatal and non-fatal overdose statistics. Synthetic opioids continue to be mixed with other drugs, often unbeknownst to users, which increase the chance of overdose. If the region's opioid abusers continue to transition from CPDs to heroin and synthetic opioids, the number of drug overdose deaths in the region will continue to rise. If fentanyl continues to be mixed with other illicit drugs, such as methamphetamine or cocaine, the number of drug overdose deaths will also rise.

## **2. Intelligence Gaps**

The impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on drug overdose fatalities in 2020 are unknown at this time. With the variety of restrictions placed on both businesses and social services, coupled with the relative isolation of many drug users, it seems likely that overdose deaths will be higher in 2020 than 2019.

## **3. Source Considerations**

The drug-related overdose mortality section relied upon two data sources: the CDC WONDER dataset and the ONDCP's drug overdose dataset. The CDC WONDER dataset represents the most recent drug mortality data that the Midwest HIDTA is able to access for each of its six states. The ONDCP's drug overdose dataset, which was extracted from the CDC WONDER data, was utilized by the Midwest HIDTA as a visualization aid.

## VIII. Outlook

The Midwest HIDTA region serves as an attractive area for drug trafficking and money laundering organizations because of its extensive transportation channels, varied demographics, substantial population, and centralized geography. For these reasons, the Midwest HIDTA region serves as the principal transit corridor for drug trafficking between the east and west coasts of the United States. The Midwest HIDTA, having herein presented the drug threat status in this region, provides its assessment of what is expected to occur within the next year.

The Midwest HIDTA assesses with a high degree of confidence that:

- ❖ Increased drug production in Mexico and South America will result in higher levels of drug availability in the Midwest. The inextricable link between drug availability and use will ultimately lead to increased levels of drug-related crime throughout the region.
- ❖ Methamphetamine will continue to pose the greatest threat to the region with its high levels of availability, demand, use, and transportation. High potency, low-cost methamphetamine transported from the Southwest Border will continue to saturate both rural and metropolitan drug markets. The level of violence and crime surrounding methamphetamine production, trafficking, and use will remain a threat to both law enforcement and the public.
- ❖ Heroin and synthetic opioids will remain a major threat to the Midwest region as the presence of fentanyl and its analogs increasingly taint drug supplies. Synthetic opioid-related overdose deaths will likely increase as long as availability and use remain high.
- ❖ The availability, demand, use, and transportation of marijuana will increase as the “medical” marijuana programs of Missouri, North Dakota, and South Dakota, and the “recreational” marijuana programs of Illinois mature. The Midwest will likely see an increase in marijuana disguised as hemp as hemp cultivation becomes more widespread. The surge in violence surrounding the marijuana trade, as noted by many Midwest HIDTA initiatives in 2020, will likely continue in the coming year.
- ❖ Mexico-based drug cartels will continue to be the primary suppliers of methamphetamine, heroin and synthetic opioids, cocaine, and counterfeit prescription drugs. Mexican cartels and their affiliated DTOs will continue to expand their influence in the region’s illicit drug trade as they increasingly control each stage of the drug distribution process. Command and control nodes
- ❖ The use of commercial parcel services by DTOs to smuggle illicit drugs will increase as criminals realize the decreased risk of detection and anonymity that accompany this technique over traditional transportation methods.
- ❖ The use of encrypted mobile applications (e.g. WhatsApp, Telegram, Signal) and social media platforms (e.g. Facebook Messenger, Snapchat) will be increasingly used by both DTOs and MLOs to avoid law enforcement interception of group communications.



## IX. Appendices

### Appendix I: Methodology

The 2021 Midwest HIDTA Threat Assessment addresses the current drug threat within the region. The Midwest HIDTA Strategic Intelligence Program prepared the Threat Assessment. Both quantitative and qualitative data were utilized to complete the Threat Assessment. The Threat Assessment process began with the development of a Law Enforcement Survey (LES) and Public Health Survey (PHS). The surveys were created to assess the drug threat in the Midwest HIDTA region and to fulfill ONDCP annual reporting requirements. The LES was sent to all HIDTA enforcement and intelligence initiatives, while the PHS was sent to its public health partners across the Midwest region. Survey respondents were able to choose between two response mechanisms: an online survey available via SurveyMonkey or an electronic fillable PDF survey. Respondents were asked to consider only their initiative's AORs when responding to survey questions. The results of the survey, combined with information from other data sources, were used to form the Midwest HIDTA Threat Assessment. Additional informational sources that were utilized to develop the Threat Assessment include: CDC WONDER data, DEA's *National Drug Threat Assessment*, EPIC, PMP data, SAMHSA's *NSDUH*, SAMHSA's TEDS dataset, and information from the U.S. Census Bureau.

The assessment of the drug threat in the Midwest HIDTA region was made while considering limitations of data sources utilized. For example, the survey was only disseminated to Midwest HIDTA enforcement and intelligence initiatives and may not represent the illicit drug threat outside of those areas represented by Midwest HIDTA initiatives. This is also true for PHS respondents, as we are not in contact with every agency. However, HIDTA initiatives have been established in areas of the region that are believed to have the greatest drug threats. Likewise, PMP data is obtained only from HIDTA initiatives. Quantitative data reported in the Threat Assessment was obtained on the following dates: PMP (MLO-related information) – March 1, 2021; PMP (DTO-related information) – March 2, 2021; PMP (drug seizure-related information) – March 1, 2021. The information provided by these sources, though incomplete, provides an important perspective into Midwest HIDTA regional drug threats and any DTO/MLO presence in 2021. An explanation of primary sources utilized to develop the Threat Assessment is provided below.

## Appendix II: Explanation of Sources

Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Performance Management Process (PMP) Data- A component of the Executive Office of the President, ONDCP was created by the Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1988. ONDCP advises the President on drug-control issues, coordinates drug-control activities and related funding across the Federal government, and produces the annual National Drug Control Strategy, which outlines Administration efforts to reduce illicit drug use, manufacturing and trafficking, drug-related crime and violence, and drug-related health consequences. PMP data contains information related to drug seizures, drug trafficking organizations (DTOs), and money laundering organizations (MLOs) known to operate in the HIDTA region. At least quarterly, each HIDTA funded task force and HIDTA are required to update the PMP database with information regarding seizures of drugs and drug-related assets, as well as changes in the status of a DTO/MLO, including when a DTO/MLO has been disrupted or dismantled.

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Injury Center Drug Overdose Deaths – This dataset is updated annually by the CDC. The data captures drug-specific overdose death data using the International Classification of Diseases, Tenth Revision (ICD-10). Drug-poisoning deaths are identified using underlying cause-of-death codes X40-X44, X60-X64, X85, and Y10-Y14.

El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC) National Seizure System (NSS) – NSS is an EPIC-managed repository for seizure information from 2000 to the present containing drugs, weapons, and currency seized above federal threshold limits.

National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) – Annual Survey used to obtain national and state-level data on the use of tobacco, alcohol, illicit drugs (including non-medical use of prescription drugs) and mental health in the United States. NSDUH is sponsored by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), an agency of the U.S. Public Health Service in the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS).

Midwest HIDTA Law Enforcement Survey (LES) – Annual Survey administered by the Midwest HIDTA ISC and used to obtain information related to the various drug threats within the Midwest HIDTA region covering: specific threats, drug-related violence and crime, distribution, smuggling, money laundering, and drug trafficking organizations. Responses are collected from HIDTA funded task forces within the Midwest HIDTA region. There were 47 responses to this year's Midwest HIDTA Threat Assessment Survey. Appendix III lists the Midwest HIDTA initiatives who responded to the 2021 LES.

Midwest HIDTA Public Health Survey (PHS) – Midwest HIDTA administered this survey to public health agencies around the HIDTA to obtain information related to the various drug threats from a public health perspective in order to supplement LES data. There were 85 responses to this year's Midwest HIDTA PHS, listed in Appendix IV.

### Appendix III: Midwest HIDTA Initiatives

The following Midwest HIDTA initiatives are grouped according to the state in which they are located. Those marked with an \* participated in the 2021 LES.

#### Illinois

Quad Cities Metropolitan Enforcement Group\*

#### Iowa

Cedar Rapids DEA Task Force\*  
Des Moines DEA Task Force\*  
Iowa Interdiction Support\*  
Muscatine Drug Task Force\*  
Tri-State Sioux City DEA Task Force\*

#### Kansas

Garden City DEA Task Force/Garden City-Finney County Drug Task Force\*<sup>g</sup>  
Kansas City/Overland Park DEA Combined Task Force\*  
Kansas Intelligence and Information Exchange\*  
Kansas Interdiction Support\*  
Topeka DEA Task Force\*  
Wichita DEA Task Force\*

#### Missouri

ATF Crime Gun Intelligence Center  
Cape Girardeau DEA Drug Task Force\*  
Franklin County Narcotics Enforcement Unit\*  
Jackson County Drug Task Force\*  
Jasper County Drug Task Force\*  
Jefferson City DEA Task Force\*  
Jefferson County Municipal Enforcement Group\*  
Kansas City DEA Interdiction Task Force\*  
Kansas City DEA Northland Task Force\*  
Kansas City FBI Combined Task Force\*  
Kansas City, Missouri Metro Task Force\*  
Kansas City Violent Crimes Task Force\*  
Midwest HIDTA ISC  
Missouri Interdiction and Information Exchange\*  
St. Charles County Drug Task Force\*  
St. Louis County Multi-Jurisdictional Drug Enforcement Task Force\*  
St. Louis DEA Intelligence Group\* (Filled out one survey for all three St Louis DEA Initiatives)  
St. Louis DEA Major Investigations/Conspiracy Group 37

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<sup>g</sup> The name of the Midwest HIDTA initiative in Garden City, KS, was changed from the Garden City DEA Task Force to the Garden City-Finney County Drug Task Force following the closure of the DEA Garden City Resident Office in late 2017. The survey respondent participating in the LES for this Threat Assessment was from the Garden City-Finney County Drug Task Force.

St. Louis DEA Violent Traffickers Task Force  
St. Louis FBI Squad 5\*  
Southeast Missouri Drug Task Force\*  
Springfield DEA Task Force\*

Nebraska

Central Nebraska Drug and Safe Streets Task Force\*  
C.O.D.E Task Force\*  
Greater Omaha Safe Streets Task Force\*  
Lincoln/Lancaster Drug Task Force\*  
Nebraska Interdiction Support\*  
Omaha ATF Illegal Firearms Task Force\*  
Omaha DEA Drug Task Force\*  
Omaha Metro Drug Task Force\*  
WING Drug Task Force\*

North Dakota

Fargo DEA Task Force\*  
Grand Forks County Task Force\*  
Metro Area Narcotics Task Force\*

South Dakota

Pennington County Drug Task Force\*  
Sioux Falls Task Force\*  
South Dakota Interdiction Support\*

## Appendix IV: 2021 PHS Participating Agencies

The following agencies/organizations participated in the 2021 Midwest HIDTA PHS and are grouped according to the state in which they are located.

### Iowa

5C Coalition	Iowa Department of Public Health
Alcohol and Drug Dependency Services	New Opportunities, Inc.
Ames Police Department	North Fayetteville Valley Community
Area Substance Abuse Council (ASAC)	Coalition
CGPH	Pathway Behavioral Services
Clayton County Development Group	Polk County Health Department
CSAC	Substance Abuse Services Center
Heartland Family Service	Substance Abuse Services for Clayton
Iowa Department on Aging	County, Inc.
Iowa Department of Human Rights	

### Kansas

Change Your Life Enterprises, Inc.	Mirror, Inc.
Children's Mercy Hospital	Southeast Kansas Mental Health Center
Gardner	University of Kansas School of Medicine -
Hoisington Police Department	Wichita
Kansas Department of Health and	
Environment	

### Missouri

Barry County Health Department	Lafayette County Sheriff's Office
Blase Properties	Lee's Summit CARES
Buchanan County Medical Examiner	North Kansas City Schools
Burrell Behavioral Health	Northland Coalition
Clay County Juvenile Office	Preferred Family Healthcare
Cox Health	Stone County Health Department
Dallas County Health Department	Taney County Ambulance District
Department of Social Services	Taney County Sheriff's Office
Elevate Branson	Tri-County Mental Health Services
Excelsior Springs Police Department	Washington University in St. Louis
Excelsior Springs SAFE	Washington University School of Medicine
Kimberling City Police Department	Washington County Health Department

Nebraska

CAPWN

Chadron High School

Chadron Middle School

Chadron Public Schools

Garden County Schools

GRPS

Heartland Family Services

Region 3 Behavioral Health Services

T.E.A.M.

Tobacco Free Hall County

North Dakota

Advance in Recovery, LLC.

First Step Recovery

Grand Forks Public School District

MPATTC

North Dakota Youth Correctional Center

Trinity Addiction Services

## Appendix V: State Maps

Individual state maps may be found in the following figures: Iowa may be found in Figure 20, Kansas in Figure 21, Missouri in Figure 22, Nebraska in Figure 23, North Dakota in Figure 24, and South Dakota in Figure 25. The maps include HIDTA designated counties, major highways and, in North Dakota’s case, the ports of entries shared with Canada.

**Figure 20. Detailed Map of Iowa Depicting HIDTA Designated Counties and Major Highway Systems.**

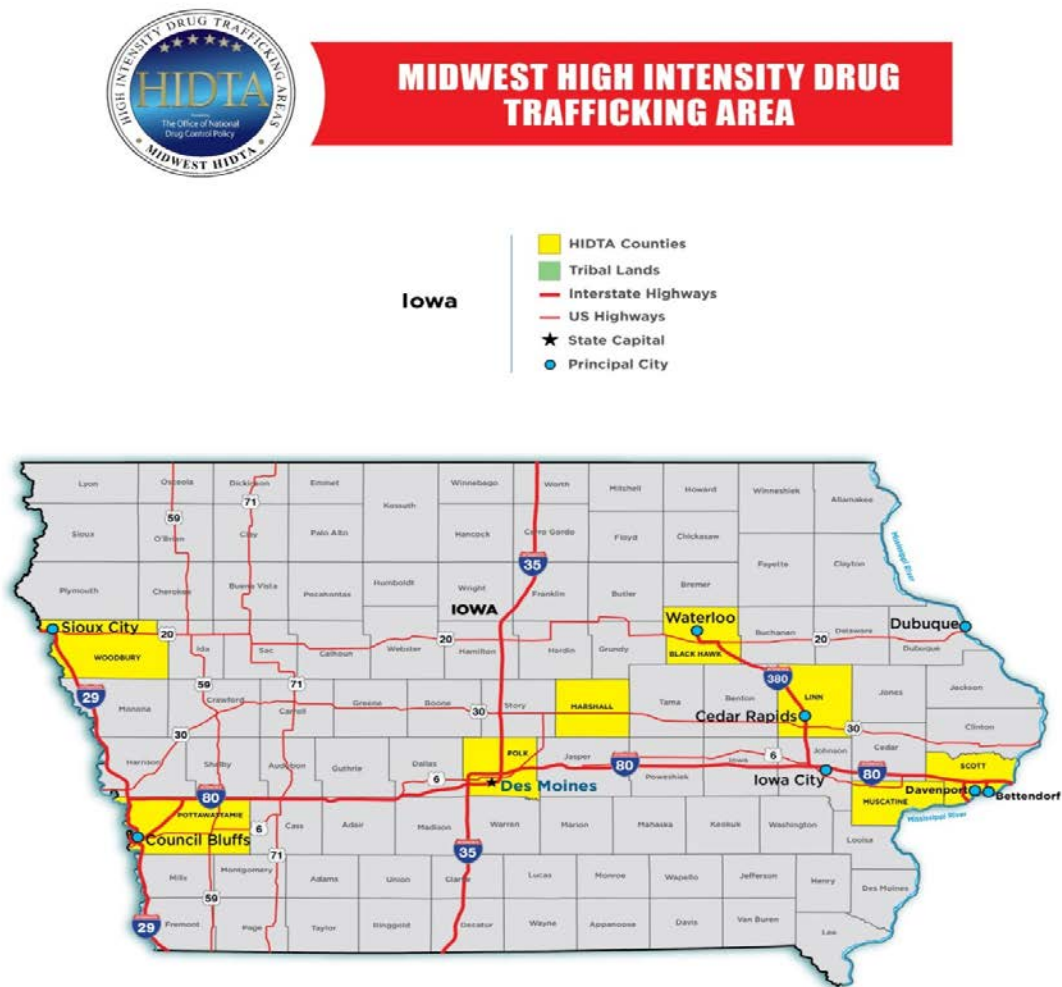


Figure 21. Detailed Map of Kansas Depicting HIDTA Designated Counties and Major Highway Systems.



# MIDWEST HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING AREA

Kansas

- HIDTA Counties
- Tribal Lands
- Interstate Highways
- US Highways
- ★ State Capital
- Principal City

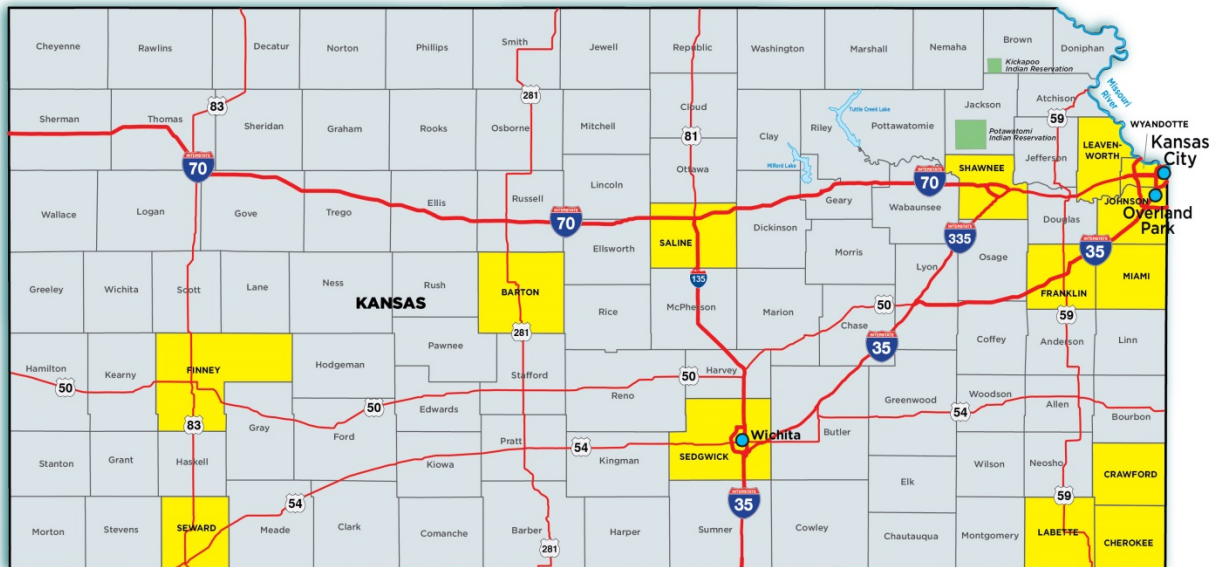




Figure 22. Detailed Map of Missouri Depicting HIDTA Designated Counties and Major Highway Systems.



# MIDWEST HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING AREA

Missouri

- HIDTA Counties
- Tribal Lands
- Interstate Highways
- US Highways
- ★ State Capital
- Principal City

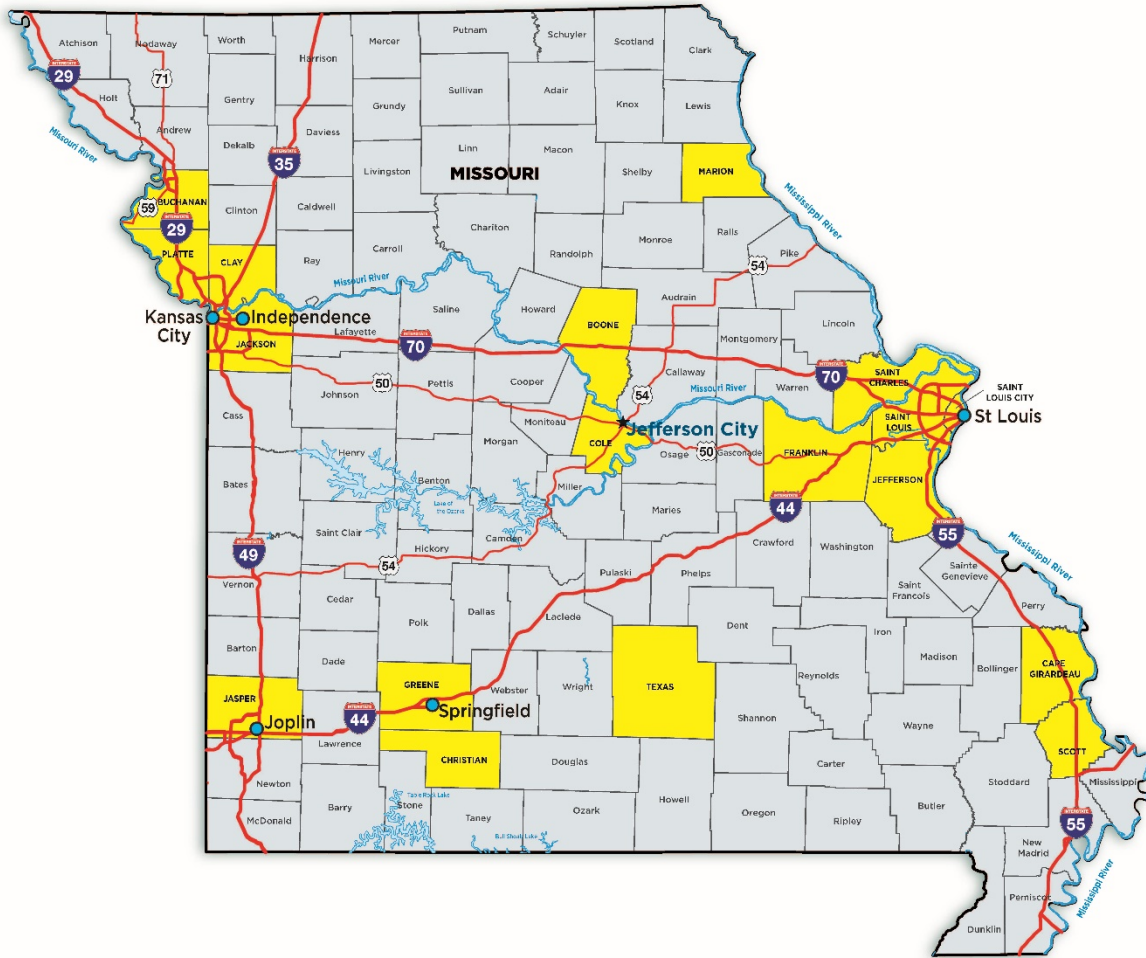
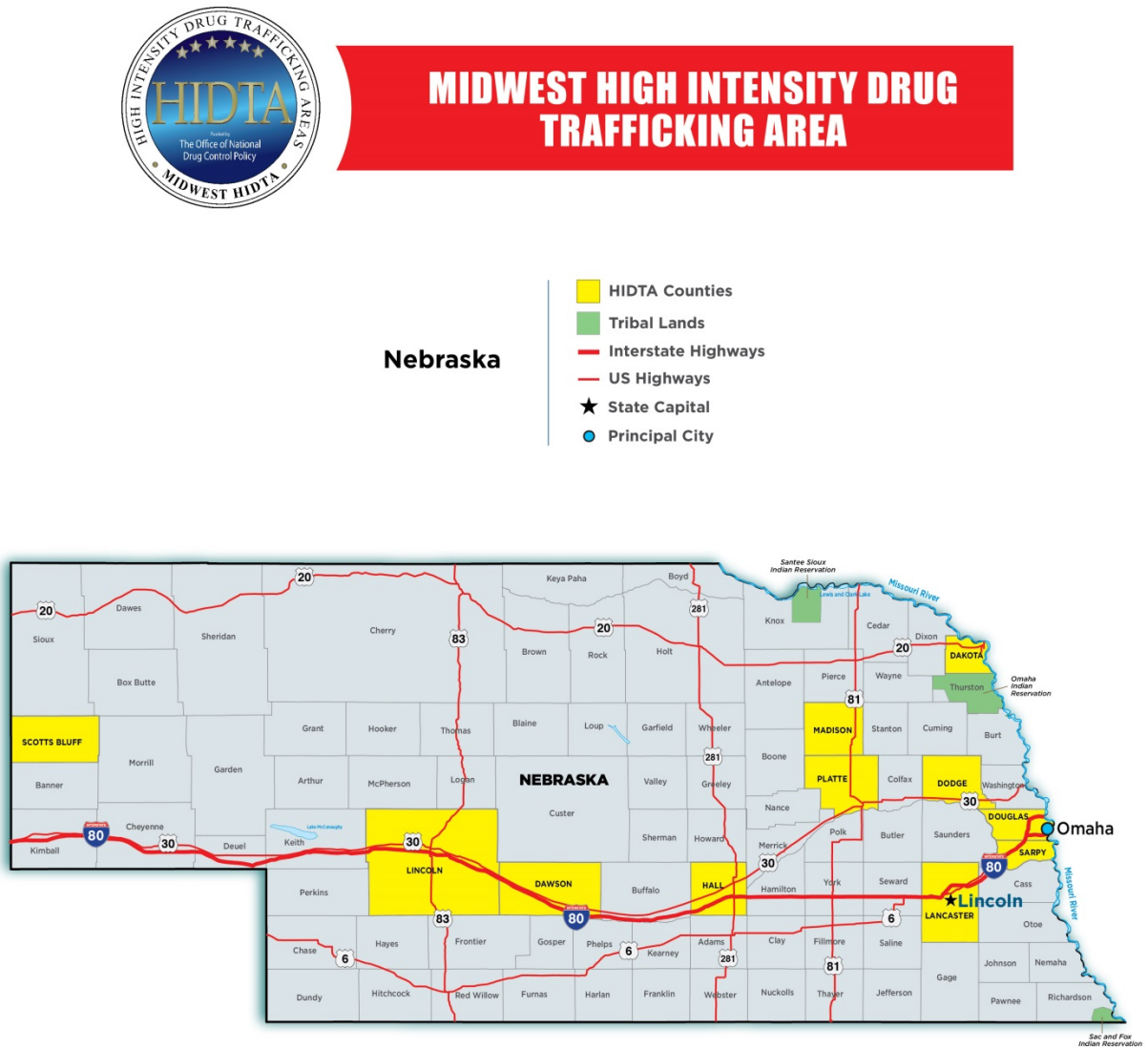


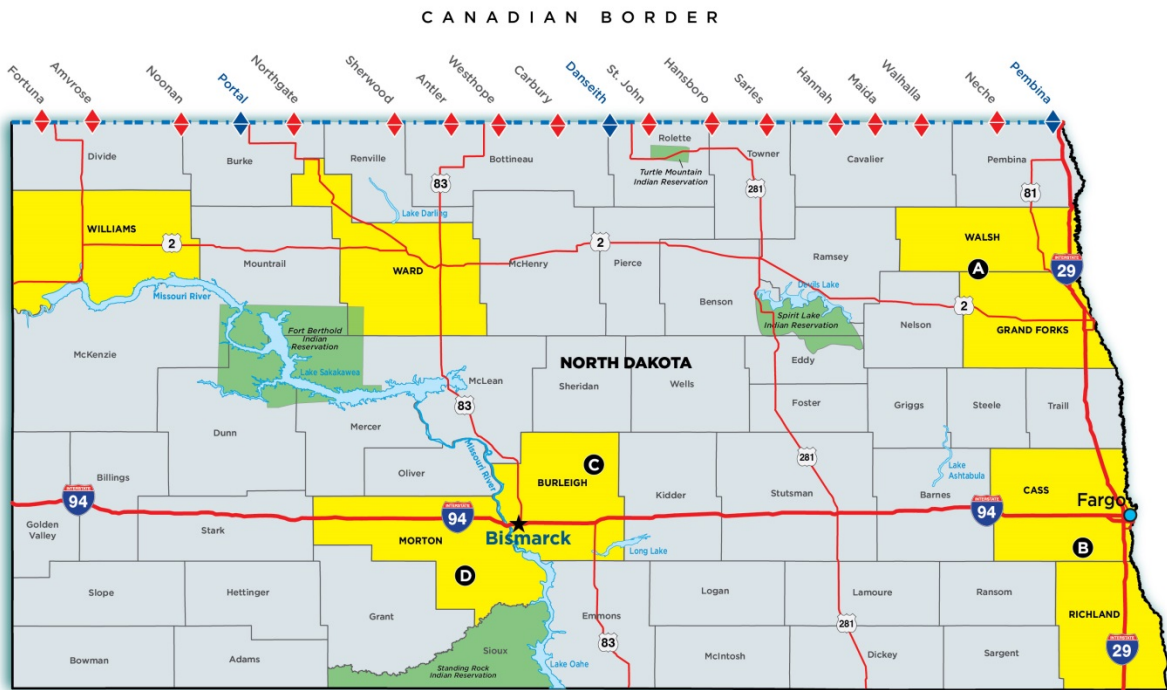
Figure 23. Detailed Map of Nebraska Depicting HIDTA Designated Counties and Major Highway Systems.



**Figure 24. Detailed Map of North Dakota Depicting HIDTA Designated Counties, Ports of Entry with Canada, and Major Highway Systems.**



**MIDWEST HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING AREA**



**North Dakota**

- HIDTA Counties
- Tribal Lands
- Interstate Highways
- US Highways
- State Capital
- Principal City
- 24-Hr Port of Entry
- Port of Entry

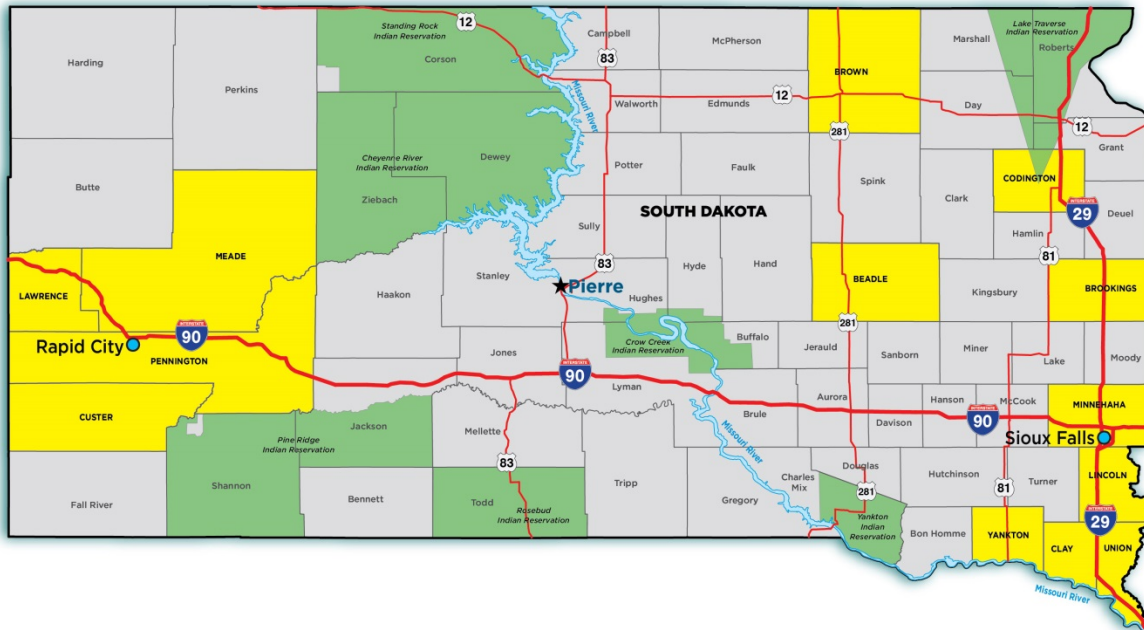
Figure 25. Detailed Map of South Dakota Depicting HIDTA Designated Counties and Major Highway Systems.



**MIDWEST HIGH INTENSITY DRUG TRAFFICKING AREA**

South Dakota

- HIDTA Counties
- Tribal Lands
- Interstate Highways
- US Highways
- ★ State Capital
- Principal City



## Appendix VI: State-Level Data Tables

**Table 24. LES and PHS: Greatest Drug Threats by State**

<b>Law Enforcement Survey: Top Drug Threats By State</b>		
	<b>Primary Threat</b>	<b>Secondary Threat</b>
<b>Iowa</b>	Methamphetamine	Heroin/Synthetic Opioids
<b>Kansas</b>	Methamphetamine	Heroin/Synthetic Opioids
<b>Missouri</b>	Methamphetamine	Heroin/Synthetic Opioids
<b>Nebraska</b>	Methamphetamine	CPDs
<b>North Dakota</b>	TIED: Methamphetamine Heroin/Synthetic Opioids/CPDs	Methamphetamine
<b>South Dakota</b>	Methamphetamine	Heroin/Synthetic Opioids
<b>Public Health Survey: Top Drug Threats By State</b>		
	<b>Primary Threat</b>	
<b>Iowa</b>	Methamphetamine	
<b>Kansas</b>	TIED: Methamphetamine, Heroin/Synthetic Opioids	
<b>Missouri</b>	Methamphetamine	
<b>Nebraska</b>	Marijuana	
<b>North Dakota</b>	TIED: Marijuana, Methamphetamine	
<b>South Dakota</b>	N/A	

**Table 25. LES: Drug Availability by State**

<b>Law Enforcement Survey: Level of Availability By State (LES)</b>						
	<b>Iowa</b>	<b>Kansas</b>	<b>Missouri</b>	<b>Nebraska</b>	<b>North Dakota</b>	<b>South Dakota</b>
<b>Cocaine</b>	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate
<b>CPDs</b>	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	High	High	Moderate
<b>Heroin/Synthetic Opioids</b>	Moderate	High	High	Moderate	High	High
<b>Marijuana</b>	High	High	High	High	High	High
<b>Methamphetamine</b>	High	High	High	High	High	High
<b>NPSs</b>	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Moderate	Low
<b>ODDs</b>	Low	Low	Moderate	Low	Moderate	Low

**Table 26. PHS: Level of Drug Use by State**

<b>PHS: Level of Use By State</b>						
	<b>Iowa</b>	<b>Kansas</b>	<b>Missouri</b>	<b>Nebraska</b>	<b>North Dakota</b>	<b>South Dakota</b>
<b>Cocaine</b>	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	N/A
<b>CPDs</b>	Moderate	High	Moderate	Moderate	Moderate	N/A
<b>Heroin/Synthetic Opioids</b>	Moderate	Low	High	Low	Moderate	N/A
<b>Marijuana</b>	High	High	High	High	High	N/A
<b>Methamphetamine</b>	High	High	High	High	High	N/A
<b>NPSs</b>	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	N/A
<b>Club Drugs</b>	Low	Low	Low	Low	Low	N/A

## Appendix VII: Drug Trafficking Organization Summary Table

**Table 27. DTO Summary Table for All Identified DTOs Operating in the Midwest HIDTA.**

<b>Midwest HIDTA DTOs Identified in 2020</b>	
<b>Characteristics</b>	
Identified	770
- International	83
- Multi-State	424
- Local	263
Total Members (Leaders)	7,733 (1,178)
Average DTO Size	10.04
Multi-ethnic	345
Gang Related	206
Violent	298
Poly-drug	184
Money Laundering Activities	105
<b>Federal Case Designations</b>	
OCDETF	87
CPOT	11
RPOT	3
PTO	95

## Appendix VIII: Drug Trafficking Organization Summary Table by State

The individual DTO summary table for each state may be found in the following figures. Quad Cities Metropolitan Enforcement Group (Rock Island County, IL) may be found in Table 28, Iowa may be found in Table 29, Kansas in Table 30, Missouri in Table 31, Nebraska in Table 32, North Dakota in Table 33, and South Dakota in Table 34. The tables present information on the DTOs found in each state that were identified in 2020.

**Table 28. DTO Summary Table for all DTOs Identified by Quad Cities Metropolitan Enforcement Group (IL).**

<b>DTOs Identified by Quad Cities Metropolitan Enforcement Group</b>	
<b>Characteristics</b>	
Identified	29
- International	2
- Multi-State	24
- Local	3
Total Members (Leaders)	120 (29)
Average DTO Size	4.13
Multi-ethnic	3
Gang Related	0
Violent	5
Poly-drug	2
<b>Federal Case Designations</b>	
OCDETF	0
CPOT	0
RPOT	0
PTO	0



**Table 29. DTO Summary Table for all Identified DTOs Operating in Iowa.**

<b>Iowa DTOs Identified</b>	
<b>Characteristics</b>	
Identified	123
- International	4
- Multi-State	82
- Local	37
Total Members (Leaders)	989 (131)
Average DTO Size	7.30
Multi-ethnic	40
Gang Related	9
Violent	19
Poly-drug	15
<b>Federal Case Designations</b>	
OCDETF	12
CPOT	1
RPOT	0
PTO	27

**Table 30. DTO Summary Table for all Identified DTOs Operating in Kansas.**

<b>Kansas DTOs Identified</b>	
<b>Characteristics</b>	
Identified	52
- International	15
- Multi-State	23
- Local	14
Total Members (Leaders)	538 (116)
Average DTO Size	10.35
Multi-ethnic	23
Gang Related	17
Violent	25
Poly-drug	19
<b>Federal Case Designations</b>	
OCDETF	11
CPOT	1
RPOT	2
PTO	15

**Table 31. DTO Summary Table for all Identified DTOs Operating in Missouri.**

Missouri DTOs Identified	
Characteristics	
Identified	314
- International	24
- Multi-State	151
- Local	139
Total Members (Leaders)	3,834 (555)
Average DTO Size	12.21
Multi-ethnic	144
Gang Related	140
Violent	200
Poly-drug	101
Federal Case Designations	
OCDETF	46
CPOT	7
RPOT	0
PTO	12

**Table 32. DTO Summary Table for all Identified DTOs Operating in Nebraska.**

Nebraska DTOs Identified	
Characteristics	
Identified	128
- International	30
- Multi-State	50
- Local	48
Total Members (Leaders)	1,315 (206)
Average DTO Size	10.27
Multi-ethnic	63
Gang Related	27
Violent	34
Poly-drug	18
Federal Case Designations	
OCDETF	17
CPOT	1
RPOT	0
PTO	35

**Table 33. DTO Summary Table for all Identified DTOs Operating in North Dakota.**

North Dakota DTOs Identified	
Characteristics	
Identified	63
- International	4
- Multi-State	43
- Local	16
Total Members (Leaders)	629 (80)
Average DTO Size	9.98
Multi-ethnic	30
Gang Related	7
Violent	8
Poly-drug	19
Federal Case Designations	
OCDETF	0
CPOT	0
RPOT	0
PTO	6

**Table 34. DTO Summary Table for all Identified DTOs Operating in South Dakota.**

South Dakota DTOs Identified	
Characteristics	
Identified	61
- International	4
- Multi-State	51
- Local	6
Total Members (Leaders)	399 (57)
Average DTO Size	6.54
Multi-ethnic	42
Gang Related	6
Violent	7
Poly-drug	10
Federal Case Designations	
OCDETF	1
CPOT	1
RPOT	1
PTO	0

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