

OVERDOSE RESPONSE STRATEGY

PUBLIC HEALTH | PUBLIC SAFETY | PARTNERSHIP



Trends, Analysis & Threats Call Summary

September 3rd, 2025

ORS Program Overview

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The [Overdose Response Strategy](#) (ORS) Program is a unique collaboration between public health and public safety to reduce overdose deaths. The work of the ORS program is carried out by the 61 ORS teams, comprised of a Drug Intelligence Officer and a Public Health Analyst, covering all 50 states, D.C., Puerto Rico and the U.S. Virgin Islands. The ORS program's four key goals are:

- Sharing data
- Supporting evidence-based response efforts
- Promoting promising strategies at the intersection of public health and public safety
- Supporting implementation of evidence-informed prevention strategies

National Overdose Data Snapshot

Steve Barnes | Technical Advisor, Overdose Response Strategy

Data Source	What to Know
Provisional Drug Overdose Deaths	As of August 2025 , overdose deaths declined 26% year-over-year (March 2025 vs March 2024), lowest 12-month total since early 2020. Decreases vary by state.
Emergency Department & EMS	ED visits for suspected overdoses have been increasing in 2025, while EMS calls showed ~8% fewer overdoses; both with notable local variation.

Presenter #1: NPS Discovery - Real Time Drug Analysis Trends

Dr. Joshua DeBord | Center for Forensic Science Research and Education (CFSRE)

Topic	What to Know
Northeast & Mid-Atlantic Region Q2 2025	Q2 2025 analysis of ~800 samples found fentanyl as the primary drug in 50%, followed by cocaine (22%) and methamphetamine (5%) Fentanyl appeared in ~68% of heroin, ~11% of cocaine, and 7% of meth samples; unclear if samples are being sold as fentanyl
NPS Benzos	Bromazolam detections declining in 2025 with simultaneous increase in phenazolam detections, signaling a potential shift in the NPS benzo market.
Alpha-2 sedatives as adulterants	Xylazine positivity down markedly; medetomidine up from ~0% in 2024 to ~42% in Q3 2025. Neither is reversible with naloxone; anticipate prolonged sedation/withdrawal
Local anesthetics ("-caines") in fentanyl	Rising detections and amounts of local anesthetics: lidocaine positivity increased from 10% to ~45%, procaine from 0% to ~35%, tetracaine from 0% to ~15%.
NPS Discovery Reports	NPS Discovery Reports, resources and newsletter sign up: http://www.npsdiscovery.org/

Presenter #2: Current National Drug Early Warning System Surveillance Efforts and Findings

Dr. Joseph Palamar | Deputy Director, National Drug Early Warning System (NDEWS)

Topic	What to Know
Medetomidine spread	Medetomidine, a veterinary sedative 200–300x stronger than xylazine, is appearing in fentanyl mixes; naloxone ineffective, withdrawal risk reported. Most prevalent in regions that previously saw xylazine; recent confirmations include Seattle, San Diego, and Florida biospecimens;
Local anesthetics ("-caines")	Sustained rise in lidocaine/procaine/tetracaine mixed with fentanyl; multi-‘-caine’ combinations increasingly documented. Atypical clinical presentations reported (numbness/tingling, arrhythmias, gray/blue skin).
BTMPS	Emerged June 2024 (Portland & Philadelphia) then spread quickly nationwide; pattern suggests centralized sourcing; mechanism and risk profile under study
Colored Ketamine Concoctions	Tusi, or “pink powders,” usually contain ketamine mixed with drugs like MDMA or meth; NDEWS Reddit monitoring indicates concerns about possible fentanyl adulteration; staying on top of these changing variations (colors & drug mixtures) remains important
Fentanyl adulterated with ketamine	Fentanyl being adulterated with ketamine (not the reverse) is now being systematically detected in colored powders in Alberta, highlighting the need for close monitoring
NYC Night Club Saliva Testing	Testing of over 1,700 nightclub attendees revealed synthetic cathinones (e.g., CMC, MMC), with most exposures appearing unintentional.
Reddit Monitoring: 7-OH	7-OH, a potent opioid-like compound found in some kratom products, is now being sold in drinks and gummies; concerns include withdrawal and overdose risks
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