



# NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

## NIJ's Role in the Strategy to Combat Fentanyl and Other Opioids: 2019 Update



As the research, development, and evaluation agency of the U.S. Department of Justice, the National Institute of Justice (NIJ) plays an important role in the Administration's efforts to combat opioid and other drug abuse. The following provides an updated overview of NIJ's Drugs and Crime Research Portfolio that addresses drug trafficking, markets, and use of illegal drugs (including prescription drug diversion) through research and capacity building for law enforcement, forensic laboratories, medical examiners and coroners, prosecutors, and other public safety and public health stakeholders.

### NIJ's Drugs and Crime Research Portfolio

NIJ furthers DOJ's priorities to combat the Nation's opioid epidemic, and reduce violent and other drug-related crime, through research that promotes effective law enforcement, court, and corrections responses to illegal drug markets. This includes research on ways to deter, investigate, and disrupt drug markets, as well as to prevent or reduce drug-related crime and violence. Heroin and other opioids such as fentanyl, diverted pharmaceuticals, synthetic drugs, and analogues are examined.

For more information on this portfolio, visit NIJ's website at [NIJ.ojp.gov/topics/drugs](https://www.nij.ojp.gov/topics/drugs)

Photo Sources: Emerging synthetic opioid U-47700, ©Keck Graduate Institute; Example of law enforcement seizure of opioid drugs and paraphernalia, ©DEA.gov; Triangular crystals resulting from a positive microcrystal test for codeine using Fulton's C-3 reagent, ©McCrone Research Institute, Chicago.

### NIJ Drugs & Crime Research

The portfolio studies crime reduction through research on:

- Epidemiology — patterns among drugs, violence, and crime to inform communities and service providers.
- Prevention and Intervention — policies and programs to prevent or reduce drug-related crime and violence.
- Drug Markets — drug production and distribution information to support law enforcement.
- Market Disruption — drug interdiction and other strategies to disrupt or deter markets.
- Forensic Science — drug recognition and detection, and support of medicolegal death investigation.



### Research on Illegal Prescription Drug Market Interventions

Past research on deterrence, investigation, and disruption of illegal prescription drug markets includes:

- Strategies and Resources for High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas
- Using the North Carolina Controlled Substances Reporting System to Identify Providers Manifesting Unusual Prescribing Practices
- Optimizing Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs) to Support Law Enforcement Activities
- Policy Analysis of Florida House Bill 7095 for Diversion of Psychoactive Prescription Drugs

For more on this research, visit NIJ's webpage at [nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/research-illegal-prescription-drug-market-interventions](https://nij.ojp.gov/topics/articles/research-illegal-prescription-drug-market-interventions)

### Drug Recognition and Impairment Research Meeting

Partnering with the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration and the National Institute on Drug Abuse, NIJ led a 2015 meeting on drug recognition and impairment research. Discussion topics were detection of illegal drugs, including quantitation (purity) of drug seizures; forensic toxicology post-use; reliable measurement of drug impairment; investigative leads for case building; collection and submission of drug evidence for laboratory analysis; tools for drug detection in the field; expert/witness testimony; confirmation of toxicological and chemical analysis; and protocols for prosecution and court case management.

For more on this meeting, visit [ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249802.pdf](https://ncjrs.gov/pdffiles1/nij/249802.pdf)

### NIJ Research on Fentanyl and Other Opioids

NIJ supports research on evidence-based tools, protocols, and policies for state, local, and tribal law enforcement and other criminal justice agencies, including:

#### *Narcotics Law Enforcement and Prosecution*

- Using Artificial Intelligence Technologies to Expose Darknet Opioid Traffickers
- Building Drug Intelligence Networks to Combat the Opioid Crisis in Rural Communities: A Collaborative Intelligence-Led Policing Strategy
- Informing the Investigation and Prosecution of Heroin-Related Overdose
- Using Social Network and Spatial Analysis of Fentanyl Distribution in a Port City
- Disrupting Illicit Fentanyl Markets on Clearenet Websites

#### *Seized Drugs and Forensic Toxicology*

- High Resolution Mass Spectrometry Screening in Forensic Toxicology: Cost Benefit Analysis
- Novel Quantitation Workflow for Improved Drug Surveillance
- Toxicological Time Travel: Retrospective Mass Spectrometry Datamining of Novel Opioid and Fentanyl Analog Use
- Electrochemical Aptamer-Based Sensor for Rapid Opioid Detection in Seized Substances
- Fast On-Site Screening for Fentanyl and Novel Psychoactive Substances by Electrochemical and Spectroscopic Tools
- Non-Contact Detection of Fentanyl and Other Synthetic Opioids
- Extraction and Quantification of Fentanyl and Metabolites From Complex Biological Matrices to Support Medicolegal Death Investigations

#### *Drug Intelligence and Community Surveillance*

- Delaware Opioid Metric Intelligence Project
- Identifying and Informing Strategies for Disrupting Opioid Distribution Networks in Pennsylvania

#### *Corrections*

- Evaluation of Using Telehealth for Opioid Use Disorders in a Correctional Setting
- Informing Medication-Assisted Treatment in the Criminal Justice System