



Illinois

Drug Threat Assessment

UPDATE

May 2002



National Drug Intelligence Center
U.S. Department of Justice

Preface

This report is a brief update to the *Illinois Drug Threat Assessment*, which is a strategic assessment of the status and outlook of the drug threat to Illinois. Analytical judgment determined the threat posed by each drug type or category, taking into account the most current quantitative and qualitative information on availability, demand, production or cultivation, transportation, and distribution, as well as the effects of a particular drug on abusers and society as a whole. While NDIC sought to incorporate the latest available information, a time lag often exists between collection and publication of data. NDIC anticipates that this update will be useful to policymakers, law enforcement personnel, and treatment providers at the federal, state, and local levels.

The *Illinois Drug Threat Assessment* was produced in January 2001 and is available on NDIC's web site www.usdoj.gov/ndic or by contacting the NDIC dissemination line at 814-532-4541.





Illinois Drug Threat Assessment Update

Overview

Illinois, particularly the Chicago area, is a national transportation hub and distribution center for illicit drugs. Major drug trafficking organizations, criminal groups, and street gangs supply cocaine, heroin, marijuana, methamphetamine, and other dangerous drugs to drug markets within and outside the state.

Cocaine is the most significant drug threat to Illinois. It is readily available throughout the state, and its distribution and abuse have been

consistently linked to violent crime. Heroin poses the next greatest drug threat to the state, particularly in the Chicago area. It is widely available, and the user population appears to be growing. Marijuana is the most readily available and commonly abused illicit drug in Illinois. Methamphetamine production and abuse are expanding in rural areas of central and southern Illinois, posing an increasing threat. Other dangerous drugs such as MDMA, GHB, ketamine, PCP, LSD, and diverted pharmaceuticals are emerging threats throughout the state.

Table 1. Drug-Related Treatment Admissions, Illinois, FY1999–FY2001

	Cocaine	Heroin	Marijuana/Hashish	Methamphetamine
FY1999	31,978	17,811	18,842	Not Recorded
FY2000	31,468	19,854	20,773	740
FY2001	31,321	24,463	25,622	1,528

Source: Illinois Department of Human Services, Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse.

Cocaine

Cocaine, both powdered and crack, is the primary drug threat to Illinois. The level of cocaine abuse in the state is high, and the number of treatment admissions for cocaine abuse exceeds the number of admissions for any other illicit drug. According to the Illinois Department of Human Services, Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, there were 31,321 cocaine-related treatment admissions in fiscal year (FY) 2001, a slight decrease from the 31,468 treatment admissions in FY2000. (See Table 1 on page 1.) The number of cocaine-related emergency department (ED) mentions also is high. According to the Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN), there were 14,879 cocaine-related ED mentions in Chicago in 2000. (See Table 2 on page 3.) In that year there were more cocaine mentions per 100,000 population (246) in Chicago than in any of the other 21 metropolitan areas reporting to DAWN. In 2000 cocaine was a factor in a significant number of deaths in the Chicago area. According to DAWN mortality data, there were 464 cocaine-related deaths in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties in 2000.

Powdered cocaine is readily available throughout most areas of the state; crack is primarily available in urban areas. Prices for powdered and crack cocaine in Illinois are stable. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), powdered cocaine sold for \$18,000 to \$28,000 per kilogram, \$800 to \$1,200 per ounce, and \$75 to \$100 per gram in the first quarter of FY2002. Crack cocaine sold for \$500 to \$1,400 per ounce and \$10 to \$25 per rock during that time.

Stable cocaine prices as well as current seizure reporting indicate a steady supply of cocaine, particularly in the Chicago area. In 2001 Chicago High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) task forces seized approximately 2,660 kilograms of powdered cocaine and 16 kilograms of crack. These amounts represent significant increases from the previous year when

785 kilograms of powdered cocaine and 1 kilogram of crack were seized.

Mexican drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) are the primary transporters of powdered cocaine into Illinois, predominantly the Chicago area. They typically transport multikilogram to ton quantities of cocaine from Mexico through southwestern states in tractor-trailers either intermingled with legitimate cargo or placed inside hidden compartments. Powdered cocaine also is transported into Illinois from other states by a variety of criminal groups and local independent dealers. In response to the National Drug Intelligence Center (NDIC) National Drug Threat Survey 2001, federal, state, and local law enforcement officials reported that criminal groups and local independent dealers in at least 10 states—Colorado, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, North Carolina, Ohio, and Wisconsin—transport cocaine into Illinois.

Cocaine often is transported from Illinois to other states, primarily by Mexican criminal groups and independent dealers. In response to the NDIC National Drug Threat Survey 2001, federal, state, and local law enforcement officials reported that cocaine was transported from Illinois to at least five states—Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, New York, and Wisconsin.

Mexican and Colombian criminal groups are the primary wholesale powdered cocaine distributors in the state; street gangs dominate retail distribution of both powdered and crack cocaine. Crack cocaine—which usually is converted at stash houses—and powdered cocaine are sold at open-air drug markets, public housing projects, private residences, and in gang-controlled communities.

Cocaine, particularly crack, is the drug most often associated with violent crime in Illinois. Law enforcement officials across the state report that retail distributors frequently carry firearms and have committed drive-by shootings, assaults, and murders.

Table 2. Emergency Department Mentions, Chicago, 1996–2000

	Cocaine	Heroin	Marijuana	Methamphetamine
1996	12,688	6,268	3,531	28
1997	14,373	8,602	4,424	29
1998	13,642	9,316	5,002	31
1999	13,399	9,629	4,555	22
2000	14,879	12,454	5,398	Not Reported

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Drug Abuse Warning Network, *Year-End 2000 Emergency Department Data*.

Heroin

Heroin poses a significant threat to the state, particularly in the Chicago area. Substance abuse indicators reveal that heroin abuse is a significant problem. The number of treatment admissions for heroin abuse increased steadily from FY1999 through FY2001. According to the Illinois Department of Human Services, Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, there were 17,811 treatment admissions for heroin abuse in FY1999, 19,854 in FY2000, and 24,463 in FY2001. (See Table 1 on page 1.) According to DAWN data, heroin-related ED mentions also are increasing, specifically in the Chicago area. The number of heroin-related ED mentions in Chicago rose from 9,629 in 1999 to 12,454 in 2000. In that year Chicago had the third highest number of heroin mentions per 100,000 population (206) of the 21 metropolitan areas reporting to DAWN. Additionally, in 2000 heroin was a factor in more deaths in the Chicago area than any other illicit drug. According to DAWN mortality data, there were 499 heroin-related deaths in Cook, DuPage, Kane, Lake, McHenry, and Will Counties in 2000.

Heroin from all major source areas (South America, Southeast Asia, Southwest Asia, and Mexico) is available in Illinois, primarily in the Chicago metropolitan area. South American and Southeast Asian heroin are the most prevalent types. Southwest Asian and Mexican brown powdered and black tar heroin also are available. Federal and state law enforcement reporting indicates

that the availability of South American heroin is increasing dramatically and may be surpassing Southeast Asian as the more readily available type of heroin in the state.

According to DEA, the average purity of South American heroin in 2001 (22.1%) was higher than any other heroin type available in Chicago. Heroin in Chicago sold for \$100,000 to \$125,000 per kilogram, \$2,500 to \$3,000 per ounce, and \$100 to \$125 per gram in the first quarter of FY2002.

Colombian DTOs and criminal groups transport South American heroin to Chicago usually by couriers aboard commercial aircraft. However, members of Mexican criminal groups independently operating on behalf of Colombian criminal groups also transport South American heroin from Mexico through southwestern states to Chicago by commercial and private vehicles. Nigerian criminal groups transport Southeast and Southwest Asian heroin to Chicago by couriers aboard commercial aircraft, buses, and trains, and via package delivery services.

Heroin also is transported from Illinois to other states for distribution. Chicago serves as a transportation hub and distribution center for heroin destined for drug markets in Illinois and other states including Indiana, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Ohio, and Wisconsin. Colombian DTOs and criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of South American heroin in Illinois. Nigerian criminal groups are the

primary wholesale distributors of Southeast and Southwest Asian heroin in the state. Chicago-based street gangs largely control retail distribution of South American, Southeast Asian, and Southwest Asian heroin. Mexican DTOs and criminal groups control all levels of distribution of Mexican brown powdered and black tar heroin in Illinois.

Marijuana

Marijuana is the most widely available and commonly abused illicit drug in Illinois. According to the Illinois Department of Human Services, Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, treatment admissions for marijuana/hashish abuse increased steadily over the past 3 years from 18,842 in FY1999 to 20,773 in FY2000, and then to 25,622 in FY2001. (See Table 1 on page 1.) According to DAWN ED data, the number of marijuana-related ED mentions increased from 4,555 in 1999 to 5,398 in 2000. (See Table 2 on page 3.) In that year Chicago had the fourth highest number of marijuana-related mentions per 100,000 population (89) of the 21 metropolitan areas reporting to DAWN.

Marijuana is readily available throughout Illinois. The dominant type of marijuana available in the state is produced in Mexico. According to DEA, in Chicago Mexican marijuana sold for \$900 to \$1,200 per pound, \$50 to \$75 per ounce, and \$3 to \$5 per gram in the first quarter of FY2002. In Rockford Mexican marijuana sold for \$600 to \$900 per pound; in Springfield, it sold for \$800 to \$1,000 per pound. Ounce and gram prices are not available.

Marijuana produced locally by independent dealers also is available. Cannabis is cultivated throughout Illinois at outdoor and indoor grow sites. Outdoor grow sites are located on public or private land and are generally concealed among vegetation or inside fenced yards. Indoor grows often are located in residential basements and have intricate lighting systems to stimulate plant growth. According to the DEA Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program,

25,685 outdoor-cultivated plants were eradicated in 1999 and 14,409 in 2000. Further, 1,335 indoor-cultivated plants were eradicated in 1999 and 3,273 in 2000.

Mexican DTOs and criminal groups supply most of the marijuana available in Illinois. They transport the marijuana in bulk quantities from Mexico through southwestern states using commercial vehicles. The marijuana often is intermingled with legitimate cargo such as produce.

Mexican DTOs and criminal groups generally supply marijuana to midlevel dealers who distribute the drug in Illinois, Michigan, Missouri, Ohio, and other states. Midlevel dealers typically are lower level Mexican criminal groups. Midlevel dealers usually distribute marijuana to Chicago-based street gangs that sell the marijuana on street corners or in low-income housing developments. However, some retail sales are prearranged using cellular telephones or pagers and occur in private residences or vehicles.

Local independent dealers control the wholesale and retail distribution of locally produced marijuana in the state. Sales usually occur at private residences, bars, or at other prearranged locations.

Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine poses a lesser threat to Illinois than cocaine and heroin. However, production and abuse are expanding in the rural areas and pose an increasing threat to the state. Substance abuse indicators reveal that methamphetamine abuse likely is increasing throughout the state. According to the Illinois Department of Human Services, Office of Alcohol and Substance Abuse, the number of methamphetamine-related treatment admissions more than doubled from 740 in FY2000 (the first year methamphetamine admissions were reported) to 1,528 in FY2001. (See Table 1 on page 1.) According to DAWN, there were 22 methamphetamine-related ED mentions in 1999; methamphetamine mentions were not reported in 2000. (See Table 2 on page 3.) Additionally, DAWN mortality data reveal that

there were two methamphetamine-related deaths in the Chicago metropolitan area in 2000.

Methamphetamine produced locally as well as in Mexico and southwestern states is available in Illinois. Locally produced methamphetamine is the most dominant type available in rural areas of central, northern, and southern Illinois. According to DEA, in the first quarter of FY2002, locally produced methamphetamine sold for \$800 to \$1,200 per ounce and \$50 per gram in Rockford. In Springfield, methamphetamine sold for \$16,000 to \$18,000 per pound, \$1,500 to \$2,000 per ounce, and \$90 to \$150 per gram.

Methamphetamine produced by Mexican criminal groups in Mexico and in southwestern states is the dominant type available in the Chicago metropolitan area. According to DEA, in the first quarter of FY2002, Mexican methamphetamine sold for \$7,300 to \$10,000 per pound, \$1,000 to \$1,300 per ounce, and \$80 to \$100 per gram in the urban areas.

Local independent Caucasian males are the primary producers of methamphetamine in the state. They generally use the Birch reduction method of production. This method requires anhydrous ammonia, a common agriculture fertilizer, as a precursor chemical. Law enforcement officials throughout rural areas of Illinois report increased thefts of anhydrous ammonia that they attribute to increased methamphetamine production in their areas. The iodine/red phosphorus method also is used to produce methamphetamine in some areas of the state, but to a much lesser extent. The number of methamphetamine laboratories in the state has increased substantially. According to the Illinois State Police, 87 laboratories were seized in 1998, 246 in 1999, 403 in 2000, and 666 in 2001.

Mexican DTOs transport methamphetamine produced in Mexico or in southwestern states to Chicago in commercial or private vehicles. Locally produced methamphetamine is transported by independent producers throughout the state primarily in private vehicles.

Locally produced methamphetamine is distributed within the state by local independent dealers. Limited law enforcement reporting reveals that outlaw motorcycle gangs also may be distributing locally produced methamphetamine at the retail level. Mexican DTOs and criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of methamphetamine produced in Mexico and southwestern states. However, according to local law enforcement reporting, this methamphetamine is not distributed extensively at the retail level in the state but is transported through Illinois for distribution in surrounding states.

Other Dangerous Drugs

The distribution and abuse of other dangerous drugs—including the stimulant MDMA, the depressants GHB and ketamine, and the hallucinogens PCP and LSD—pose an increasing threat, particularly to the state's teenagers and young adults. The diversion and abuse of pharmaceuticals also are serious and growing concerns in the state.

MDMA

MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) is readily available in Illinois and is the most commonly abused club drug in the state, particularly in the Chicago area. Most MDMA available in the state is produced in Western Europe, primarily the Netherlands and Belgium, and is transported to Illinois via package delivery services and by couriers on commercial airlines. However, law enforcement officials in Chicago seized a tablet press in early 2002, indicating that powdered MDMA possibly is being pressed into tablets in the area.

Asian, Eastern European, and Israeli criminal groups smuggle most of the MDMA currently available in Illinois. These groups typically transport the drug in tablet form directly to Chicago or through New York City. However, law enforcement reporting reveals that MDMA increasingly is being transported in tablet and powdered forms through cities in Canada en route to Chicago. Powdered MDMA is transported to Canada,

pressed into tablets or placed into capsules, and then transported to Chicago for distribution.

The criminal groups that transport MDMA into Illinois are the drug’s primary wholesale distributors. They usually sell large quantities of tablets (5,000 or more) to midlevel dealers—primarily ethnic criminal groups and independent Caucasian dealers. MDMA typically is sold and abused by teenagers and young adults at raves and dance clubs, on college and high school campuses, and at private parties. MDMA tablets sell for \$5 to \$7 at the wholesale level, \$7 to \$15 at the midlevel, and \$20 to \$30 at the retail level.

MDMA

MDMA, also known as ecstasy, Adam, XTC, E, and X, is a stimulant and low-level hallucinogen. Sometimes called the hug drug, MDMA purportedly helps abusers to be more “in touch” with others and “opens channels of communication.” However, abuse of the drug can cause psychological problems similar to those associated with methamphetamine and cocaine abuse including confusion, depression, sleeplessness, anxiety, and paranoia. The physical effects can include muscle tension, involuntary teeth clenching, blurred vision, and increased heart rate and blood pressure. MDMA abuse also can cause a marked increase in body temperature leading to muscle breakdown, kidney failure, cardiovascular system failure, stroke, or seizure as reported in some fatal cases. Research suggests that MDMA abuse may result in long-term and sometimes permanent damage to parts of the brain that are critical to thought and memory.

GHB

GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) is available throughout the state, but it is abused most frequently in the Chicago metropolitan area. In 2001 federal, state, and local law enforcement officials at the Chicago HIDTA seized approximately

6,591 milliliters of liquid GHB and over 86 pounds of powdered GHB. The drug typically is used by young adults at raves and dance clubs. Because of its sedative properties, GHB has also been used to facilitate sexual assault. It usually is sold in liquid and powdered forms for \$5 to \$10 per dose at the retail level.

Ketamine

The ketamine available in Illinois is smuggled into the state from Mexico or is stolen from veterinary offices. Ketamine is an injectable anesthetic that, when taken in large doses, causes reactions similar to those experienced with PCP abuse. Local independent dealers are the primary distributors of ketamine in Illinois. The drug usually is sold at raves and dance clubs. It is sold in liquid and powdered forms for approximately \$60 per dose.

PCP

The hallucinogen PCP (phencyclidine) is becoming increasingly available in Illinois. The drug is produced and transported to the state from surrounding areas such as Gary, Indiana, and it is also produced in Chicago. The drug is distributed by street gangs and local independent dealers. PCP abusers often display unpredictable and violent behavior that may present a danger to law enforcement officials and others. PCP commonly is smoked in cigarettes that have been dipped in the liquid form of the drug. One PCP-laced cigarette sells for \$15 at the retail level.

LSD

The hallucinogen LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide) is available in Illinois, but to a lesser extent than PCP. LSD often is applied to blotter paper and candy or disguised as breath freshener drops. The drug usually is sold at raves and dance clubs by local independent dealers for \$15 to \$20 per dose.

Diverted Pharmaceuticals

Pharmaceuticals are diverted, distributed, and abused in Illinois; however, the threat posed by the diversion, distribution, and abuse of pharmaceuticals is lower than that of other illicit drugs. Commonly abused pharmaceuticals include OxyContin, Valium, Vicodin, and Xanax. Pharmaceuticals generally are acquired by abusers and distributors through forged or stolen prescriptions, “doctor shopping” (individuals who may or may not have a legitimate ailment visit numerous physicians to obtain drugs in excess of what should be legitimately prescribed), and theft from pharmacies and nursing homes.

Outlook

Cocaine will likely remain the most significant drug threat to Illinois because of high demand for and ready availability of the drug throughout the state. The level of violence associated with crack cocaine distribution and abuse will continue to contribute to the magnitude of the threat. Mexican DTOs and criminal groups have well-established transportation and distribution networks in Illinois; therefore, it is likely they will continue as the dominant suppliers and wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine throughout the state. Street gangs will continue to dominate the retail distribution of powdered and crack cocaine.

Heroin, primarily South American and Southeast Asian, will continue to pose a considerable threat to the state, particularly in the Chicago area. It is likely that South American heroin will surpass Southeast Asian heroin as the most prevalent type, particularly as Colombian DTOs continue to exploit heroin markets in the state.

Marijuana will remain the most commonly available and widely abused illicit drug in Illinois. Cannabis will continue to be cultivated at indoor and outdoor grow sites throughout the state; however, locally produced marijuana will not become more prevalent than Mexican marijuana.

Methamphetamine production, availability, and abuse will continue to increase, particularly in rural areas of central and southern Illinois. Law enforcement reporting indicates that methamphetamine availability also is increasing in northern areas of the state, contributing to the overall threat.

MDMA and GHB abuse will continue, particularly among teenagers and young adults. Rave and dance clubs will remain the primary outlets for these drugs, but it is likely that they will continue to be sold on college and high school campuses and at private parties.

Ketamine, PCP, LSD, and diverted pharmaceuticals will continue to pose a low threat to the state. Select groups of users, particularly teenagers and young adults, will continue to abuse these drugs.

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