May 2002

North Dakota

Drug Threat Assessment

National Drug Intelligence Center
U.S. Department of Justice

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Preface

This report is a strategic assessment that addresses the status and outlook of the drug threat to North Dakota. 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, particularly demand-related data sets. NDIC anticipates that this drug threat assessment will be useful to policymakers, law enforcement personnel, and treatment providers at the federal, state, and local levels because it draws upon a broad range of information sources to describe and analyze the drug threat to North Dakota.

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North Dakota Drug Threat Assessment

Executive Summary

Mexican criminal groups dominate the transportation and wholesale distribution of methamphetamine and marijuana in North Dakota. These groups are also the primary transporters of powdered cocaine and heroin into the state, obtaining their drug supply from drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups based primarily in Mexico. Mexican criminal groups often transport multiple drugs in private vehicles.

Methamphetamine is the most significant drug threat to North Dakota and is the drug-related investigative priority for federal, state, and local law enforcement officials. Treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities for methamphetamine abuse from 1994 through 1999 surpassed admissions for abuse of any other illicit drug except marijuana. Methamphetamine is readily available, and its availability is increasing throughout the state. Law enforcement officials seized more methamphetamine statewide in 1999 than they seized during the previous 4 years combined. They report that Mexico-produced methamphetamine is the most common type available, followed by methamphetamine produced in California by Mexican criminal groups. High purity methamphetamine produced in small quantities in North Dakota is also of great concern. The number of methamphetamine laboratory seizures has increased since 1998. Mexican criminal groups transport multipound quantities of the drug from Mexico and California via Minnesota and Washington and distribute the drug at the wholesale level. Caucasian and Native American local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of Mexico- and California-produced methamphetamine. Independent methamphetamine producers, primarily Caucasians, are the retail distributors of locally produced methamphetamine. In addition, the Sons of Silence outlaw motorcycle gang transports small amounts of methamphetamine, primarily from transshipment points in Colorado, and distributes the drug at the retail level in North Dakota.

Marijuana is the drug of choice and the most readily available drug in North Dakota. Treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities for marijuana abuse nearly doubled between 1994 and 1999. Marijuana availability also is increasing throughout the state, leading to corresponding increases in investigations, seizures, and arrests. Most of the marijuana seized in the state is produced in Mexico. High potency marijuana also is produced locally, primarily in small quantities indoors. Canada-produced marijuana is

available as well. Mexican criminal groups transport multipound quantities of Mexico-produced marijuana through the southwestern states into North Dakota and distribute the drug at the wholesale level. Caucasian and Native American local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of Mexico-produced marijuana, while local producers distribute locally produced marijuana.

In North Dakota, powdered **cocaine** availability and abuse are stable at low levels, and crack cocaine availability and abuse are very limited. Pound and kilogram amounts of cocaine are not available in the state. The limited amount of crack that is available is converted locally by retail distributors. Mexican criminal groups transport small quantities of powdered cocaine from Mexico through the southwestern states and distribute it to local Caucasian and Native American independent dealers and African American street gangs that sell the drug at the retail level. These independent dealers and street gangs also are involved in the retail distribution of crack cocaine.

Other dangerous drugs, including club drugs, hallucinogens, and diverted pharmaceuticals, appeal to a small segment of the population. Abuse of club drugs and hallucinogens occurs primarily in urban areas and is concentrated on high school and college campuses. Caucasian independent dealers are the primary transporters and distributors of club drugs and hallucinogens into and throughout North Dakota. The diversion and abuse of pharmaceuticals pose a growing threat to North Dakota.

The availability and abuse of **heroin** are limited in North Dakota. The Bureau of Criminal Investigation reports very few heroin investigations. Law enforcement officials report that Mexican black tar heroin is the primary type available, although Mexican brown powdered heroin is occasionally available. Mexican criminal groups transport, distribute, and abuse most of the heroin available in North Dakota. However, in Fargo and Grand Forks these groups distribute heroin to Caucasian independent dealers who sell the drug at the retail level.

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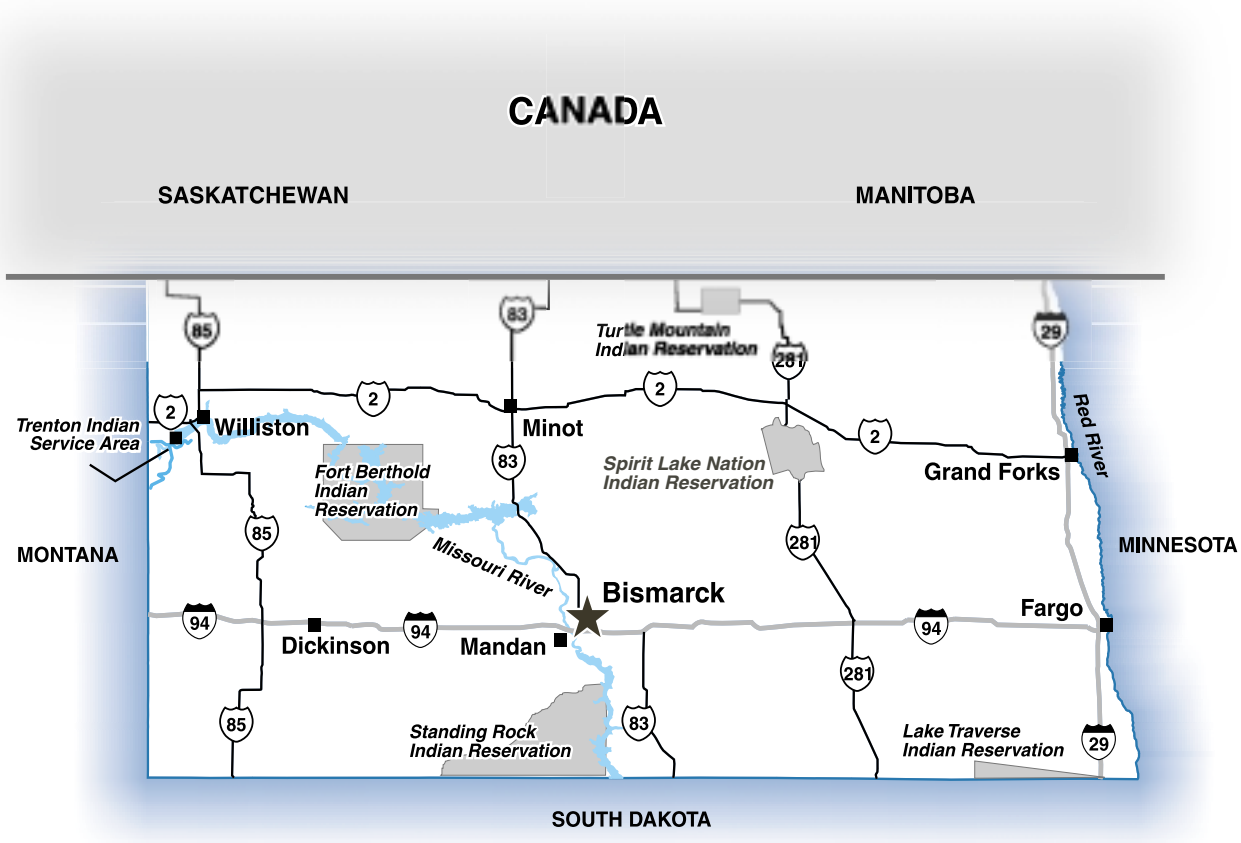

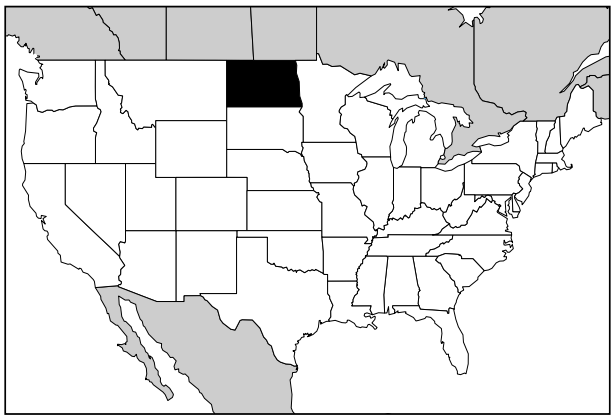

North Dakota.

Note: This map displays features mentioned in the report.

North Dakota
Drug Threat Assessment

Overview

North Dakota, one of the least populated states in the nation, has nearly 650,000 residents. The population is 92.3 percent Caucasian, 4.9 percent Native American/Alaska Native, 1.2 percent Hispanic, 0.6 percent African American, 0.6 percent Asian, and 0.4 percent categorized as other. North Dakota has four Native American Indian reservations—Turtle Mountain, Standing Rock Nation, Fort Berthold, and Spirit Lake Nation—and one Native American community, the Trenton Indian Service Area. The Lake Traverse (Sisseton) Reservation, which is located primarily in northeastern South Dakota, extends northward to include the southeastern North Dakota counties of Sargent and Richland.

North Dakota is a rural state dominated by grasslands. The state's leading industries are grain and beef production. With a land area of nearly 69,000 square miles, North Dakota has a population density of 9.3 persons per square mile. The Red River Valley, where Fargo and Grand Forks are located, is the most densely populated area of the state. The remaining population of North Dakota is concentrated in the cities of Bismarck, Dickinson, and Minot.

North Dakota's highways facilitate illicit drug transportation and distribution into and through the state. Interstates 29 and 94, intersecting at Fargo, are the major interstates in North Dakota. Fargo and Grand Forks are linked with Canada to the north and Kansas City, Missouri, to the south via I-29. Interstate 94 connects Bismarck and Fargo

Fast Facts

North Dakota

Population (2000)	642,200
U.S. population ranking	47th
Median household income (2000)	$34,665
Unemployment rate (2001)	2.4%
Land area	68,976 square miles
Capital	Bismarck
Other principal cities	Dickinson, Fargo, Grand Forks, and Minot
Number of counties	53
Principal industries	Agriculture, food processing, manufacturing, mining, and tourism

with Minneapolis and Chicago, both drug distribution centers. U.S. Highways 83, 85, and 281 tie North Dakota to Canada as well as points south.

North Dakota shares its northern border with the Canadian provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba. North Dakota has 18 authorized land ports of entry (POEs), but only 3 of these are staffed 24 hours a day. The border is remote and sparsely populated. Numerous roads lack U.S. Customs Service or U.S. Border Patrol stations. On a daily basis local residents on both sides of the border cross unchallenged. These remote areas provide criminal groups with opportunities to smuggle drugs and other contraband without detection by law enforcement personnel.

Mexican criminal groups use various means to transport drugs into North Dakota. Private vehicles are the most common means used to transport drugs, although package delivery services, tractor-trailers, and rail services also are used. Drugs may also be transported by aircraft. Though limited, commercial airline services are available primarily in Bismarck, Fargo, Grand Forks, and Minot. Although there are relatively few commercial air flights, the state has many small local airports and remote landing strips. Many of these strips provide unrestricted access to Canada, a possible source of drugs and contraband.

Mexican criminal groups use Native Americans and Indian reservations to facilitate drug distribution in North Dakota. The North Dakota Indian Affairs Commission reports that the unemployment rate on Indian reservations averages 55 percent. This high rate of unemployment may result in a large number of individuals who are willing to engage in criminal activities to support themselves. Mexican criminal groups often employ members of the Native American population to distribute drugs on and off the reservations. The groups routinely use private vehicles to transport drugs into reservations from Mexico and California. Native American independent dealers distribute the drugs to Caucasian abusers in cities such as Bismarck, Fargo, and Grand Forks. Caucasian abusers also go to reservations to purchase marijuana and methamphetamine. Drug investigations, which are complicated by jurisdictional issues regarding the sovereignty of Indian reservations, require a cooperative effort among tribal, federal, state, and local law enforcement officials. The remote locations of these reservations provide potential sites for methamphetamine production, although to date there have been few reports of this activity occurring on North Dakota reservations.

African American street gangs have been involved in limited retail distribution of powdered cocaine and, to a very limited extent, crack cocaine in urban areas of the state; however, drug-related gang activity is not considered a significant threat. An African American street gang reportedly purchased cocaine in St. Cloud and St. Paul, Minnesota, for distribution in Fargo. The gang also allegedly maintained connections to gangs based in Chicago, Illinois. Drug-related gang activity also has been reported in the North Dakota cities of Dickinson and Williston.

There are no open-air drug markets in North Dakota. This is attributable to the limited supplies of drugs such as heroin and powdered and crack cocaine, which are often sold at open-air markets in other states, and to North Dakota's harsh climate.

Drug abuse remains a concern in North Dakota. The 1999 Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS) indicates that annual treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities for alcohol and/or drug abuse in North Dakota increased overall from 2,409 in 1994 to 2,659 in 1998 and then decreased to 2,108 in 1999. The same report notes that males composed 72.6 percent of North Dakota residents 18 years and older admitted for treatment for all drugs (alcohol included) in 1999. Individuals aged 21 to 25 and those aged 31 to 35 accounted for the highest percentage of treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities—14.0 and 13.6 percent, respectively. In 1999, of the total number of individuals in treatment for alcohol and/or drug abuse in North Dakota (2,108), 24.8 percent (523) were American Indian/Alaska Native, a disproportionate percentage.

Drug abuse is widespread among arrestees in North Dakota. The North Dakota Department of Corrections reported that in 1999, 56 percent of all arrestees incarcerated at correction facilities were sentenced for violent and/or drug-related crimes, and 62 percent of those incarcerated had a problem with chemical dependency. Furthermore, 80 percent of all offenders confessed that they were under the influence of drugs or alcohol upon commission of a crime.

Arrest and sentencing data may indicate increasing drug availability throughout North Dakota. During a 10-year period, arrests for drug violations in North Dakota increased 122 percent from 682 arrests in 1989 to 1,517 arrests in 1998; however, drug arrests decreased slightly to 1,456 in 1999. Uniform Crime Report (UCR) data indicate an overall increase of 95 percent in drug arrests from 745 in 1990 to 1,456 in 1999. According to the U.S. Sentencing Commission, slightly more than 60 percent of all individuals sentenced were sentenced for methamphetamine-related offenses in North Dakota during the 4-year period 1997 through 2000.

Methamphetamine

Methamphetamine is the most significant drug threat to North Dakota and is the drug-related investigative priority for federal, state, and local law enforcement officials. Treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities for methamphetamine abuse from 1994 through 1999 surpassed admissions for abuse of any other illicit drug except marijuana. Methamphetamine is readily available, and its availability is increasing throughout the state. Law enforcement officials seized more methamphetamine statewide in 1999 than during the previous 4 years combined. They report that Mexico-produced methamphetamine is the most common type available, followed by methamphetamine produced in California by Mexican criminal groups. High purity methamphetamine produced in small quantities in North Dakota is also of great concern. The number of methamphetamine laboratory seizures has increased since 1998. Mexican criminal groups transport multipound quantities of the drug from Mexico and California via Minnesota and Washington and distribute the drug at the wholesale level. Caucasian and Native American local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of Mexico- and California-produced methamphetamine. Independent methamphetamine producers, primarily Caucasians, are the retail distributors of locally produced methamphetamine. In addition, the Sons of Silence outlaw motorcycle gang (OMG) transports small amounts of methamphetamine, primarily from transshipment points in Colorado, and distributes the drug at the retail level in North Dakota.

Abuse

Methamphetamine abuse is a serious problem in North Dakota. However, federal abuse statistics indicate that methamphetamine treatment admissions may be decreasing. TEDS data indicate that methamphetamine treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities increased from 23 in 1994 to 95 in 1997, then decreased to 69 in 1999. (See Table 1 on page 4.) Nevertheless, North Dakota health officials report that there were more methamphetamine treatment admissions between 1994 and 2000 than for any other illicit drug except marijuana. In North Dakota in 1999 males composed 62.3 percent of treatment admissions. In the same year 94.2 percent of treatment admissions were Caucasian, and 5.8 percent were Native American/Alaska Native. The age groups with the highest percentage of users—ages 18 to 20 and 31 to 35—each accounted for 23.2 percent of methamphetamine treatment admissions. According to the NDIC National Drug Threat

Survey 2001, officials from the Bismarck Police Department reported an increasing number of methamphetamine overdoses in their jurisdiction.

Methamphetamine abuse among North Dakota youth is a concern. According to the 1999 North Dakota Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS), methamphetamine abuse among high school students in North Dakota is above the national average. Nearly 11 percent of high school students in North Dakota reported lifetime methamphetamine use compared with slightly more than 9 percent nationally.

Table 1. Methamphetamine-Related Treatment Admissions to Publicly Funded Facilities North Dakota, 1994–1999

Year	Admissions
1994	**23**
1995	**46**
1996	**60**
1997	**95**
1998	**88**
1999	**69**

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set.

Availability

Methamphetamine availability is reportedly increasing throughout North Dakota. Methamphetamine produced in Mexico is the most prevalent type available in North Dakota, followed by methamphetamine produced in California by Mexican criminal groups. The amount of methamphetamine seized by the Mandan Police Department increased dramatically from 14.2 grams in 1993 to 3,402 grams in 2000. Methamphetamine-related investigations increased throughout North Dakota from 48 in 1995 to 119 in 1999. Arrests increased from 24 in 1995 to 116 in 1999. According to the U.S. Sentencing Commission, methamphetamine-related federal sentences in North Dakota increased overall from 10 in 1995 to 25 in 2000; nationally, sentences increased overall from 1,167 in 1995 to 3,397 in 2000.

Increases in the number of methamphetamine samples submitted to the North Dakota Crime Laboratory may further indicate increasing availability. The North Dakota Crime Laboratory reported an overall increase of methamphetamine samples submitted for analysis from 1992 through 2000—14 samples in 1992, 65 in 1993, 494 in 1999, and 1,218 in 2000.

Methamphetamine prices in North Dakota are decreasing, possibly indicating an increase in availability. Prices in FY1999 ranged from $125 to $200 per gram and $2,000 to $2,500 per ounce, while in FY2000, prices ranged from $100 to $120 per gram and $1,000 to $1,300 per ounce.

Violence

In North Dakota methamphetamine-related violence poses a threat to the safety of the population. Methamphetamine abusers can be violent and can endanger themselves and those around them, especially during the tweaking stage. Tweaking occurs at the end of a binge when nothing, not even additional methamphetamine, will relieve the abuser's feelings of emptiness and dysphoria. The tweaking stage is very uncomfortable for abusers, who often take depressants to ease the unpleasant feelings. Tweakers often are irritable and prone to unpredictable behavior. In 1996 a Fargo man

under the influence of methamphetamine set his house on fire because he believed that the police had installed surveillance equipment in it. In May 2000 another methamphetamine abuser ripped the drywall off the entire inside of his house and kicked in his television set because he believed that police had invaded the house through the sewer and had installed listening devices in his walls and television set.

The potential for violence associated with methamphetamine production in North Dakota is significant. Methamphetamine producers go to great lengths to prevent discovery of laboratory sites, often endangering the lives of others including law enforcement personnel. In April 2000 Burleigh County law enforcement officials arrested a 17-year-old male for producing methamphetamine and allegedly threatening to kill coworkers if they disclosed the location of his laboratory. Three other individuals, ranging in age from 18 to 20, also were arrested in connection with the laboratory. The 20-year-old possessed a weapon and had a prior criminal record for methamphetamine distribution.

Possible Methamphetamine Related Executions

In September 2001 a Native American father and son, ages 19 and 40, were found murdered on a township road in rural Grand Forks County. The two were each shot multiple times. Their executions are believed to be linked to their involvement with a Mexican criminal group and the distribution of methamphetamine. The Grand Forks County Sheriff's Department is continuing the investigation into their murders.

Source: Grand Forks County Sheriff's Department.

Production

Most of the methamphetamine seized by law enforcement officials in North Dakota is produced in Mexico or California. Mexico- and California-produced methamphetamine usually is identified by the presence of the cutting agent MSM, which reduces purity levels. Local independent producers—primarily Caucasians—dominate state methamphetamine production.

Methamphetamine production in North Dakota is low but increasing. Seizures of methamphetamine laboratories in North Dakota increased overall from 5 in 1998 to 46 in 2000, and preliminary 2001 reporting indicates that seizures are likely to increase again. Of the 46 laboratories seized in 2000 by the North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI), 22 were located in rural areas, 17 were in urban areas, and 7 were in small towns. All North Dakota respondents to the NDIC National Drug Threat Survey 2001 reported increases in laboratory seizures. During the second quarter of 2001, 19 laboratories were seized statewide in North Dakota compared with 9 during the same period in 2000. Officers from the Northwest Narcotics Task Force—encompassing Divide, Williams, and McKenzie Counties located along the state's northwestern border with Montana—typically seize 4 laboratories per year; however, by June 2001 the task force had seized 12.

MSM as a Cutting Agent

MSM is the common commercial name for the chemical methylsulfonylmethane. Alternate names for the same compound are methylsulfone and dimethylsulfone ($DMSO_2$).

MSM is marketed as a nutritional supplement for both humans and horses and is available in bulk quantities at veterinarian supply stores, feed stores, and through equine supply catalogs. MSM also is available for purchase in health food stores and via the Internet. Mexico- and California-based methamphetamine producers use the easily obtained MSM as an inexpensive cutting agent.

Methamphetamine Laboratory Discovered in Residence

In February 2001 officers from the North Dakota BCI, the Northwest Narcotics Task Force, and the Williston Police and Sheriff's Departments arrested three individuals for producing methamphetamine in their residence. The house was wired with a monitoring system and motion detectors. When the officers entered the house through the front door, one of the laboratory operators threw the still-active laboratory out a rear window, splashing officers with chemicals. Officers seized a loaded handgun.

Source: Midwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area, May 2001.

Most methamphetamine production in North Dakota takes place in large national forests and wilderness areas. The North Dakota Forest Service manages five state forests totaling 13,278 acres, nine national wildlife reserves, and two national grassland areas. These remote locations are well suited for methamphetamine production and the disposal of toxic waste.

Most of the methamphetamine laboratories seized in North Dakota are small Birch reduction method operations capable of producing ounce quantities. North Dakota respondents to the NDIC National Drug Threat Survey 2001 as well as other law enforcement officials reported that, in their jurisdictions, the Birch reduction method was the most prevalent. In 2000, 43 of the 46 laboratories seized statewide used the Birch reduction method; 3 used the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method.

Birch reduction method laboratories are unsophisticated and easy to assemble, and the precursor chemicals associated with this method are readily available. Typical laboratory equipment includes ordinary beverage containers (thermos jugs, soda containers, and large plastic cups), kitchen utensils (spatulas, stirrers, plastic bowls), and other household items. The precursor chemical pseudoephedrine may be obtained from products purchased over the counter at any convenience store or pharmacy. A second precursor chemical, anhydrous ammonia, often is stolen from agricultural suppliers or from storage tanks in farm fields. Other essential chemicals used in methamphetamine production are found in products such as starter fluid, denatured alcohol, drain cleaner, lye, and lithium batteries, which are available at local hardware and discount stores. Often laboratory operators purchase these products in small quantities to avoid arousing suspicion. Officials from the Bismarck Police Department report increasing thefts of over-the-counter medications and chemicals used in methamphetamine production.

Methamphetamine Laboratories in Rural North Dakota

North Dakota law enforcement officials are discovering that methamphetamine producers are creating laboratories small enough to fit into briefcases, allowing ease in mobility and concealment. Other operators produce methamphetamine in junked cars, basements, caves built beneath garages, abandoned farm buildings, apartment buildings, and even in babies' bedrooms.

Source: North Dakota Bureau of Criminal Investigation.

North Dakota law enforcement officials also are concerned with increasing thefts of precursor chemicals throughout the state. Officials from the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Fargo Resident Office report that thefts of anhydrous ammonia increased significantly during 2000 and 2001. Officials report that during the week of November 12, 2001, they seized six Birch reduction method laboratories—all were seized along with stolen anhydrous ammonia containers. In the fall of 1999 Cavalier County law enforcement officials arrested an Idaho woman in possession of equipment commonly used to steal anhydrous ammonia. According to the Cavalier County sheriff, the woman said that she was "in heaven" with all the anhydrous ammonia tanks and if producers knew of the ready availability of the chemical, more would come to North Dakota. The woman's arrest led officials from the Cavalier County Sheriff's Department to a methamphetamine laboratory in the small town of Hansboro on the U.S.–Canada border. In addition, North Dakota

Methamphetamine Production Methods

Ephedrine/Pseudoephedrine Reduction:

- **Hydriodic acid/red phosphorus**. The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, hydriodic acid, and red phosphorus. This method can yield multipound quantities of high quality d-methamphetamine and often is associated with Mexican drug trafficking organizations.
- **Iodine/red phosphorus**. The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, iodine, and red phosphorus. The required hydriodic acid in this variation of the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method is produced by the reaction of iodine in water with red phosphorus. This method yields high quality d-methamphetamine. Another iodine/red phosphorus method, limited to small production batches, is called the cold cook method because the chemicals, instead of being heated, are placed in a hot environment such as in direct sunlight.
- **Birch**. The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, anhydrous ammonia, and sodium or lithium metal. Also known as the "Nazi" method, this method typically yields ounce quantities of high quality d-methamphetamine and often is used by independent dealers and producers.

Phenyl-2-propanone:

- **P2P**. The principal chemicals are phenyl-2-propanone, aluminum, methylamine, and mercuric acid. This method yields lower quality dl-methamphetamine and has been associated with outlaw motorcycle gangs.

BCI officers have documented eight instances in which individuals traveled from Minnesota to steal anhydrous ammonia to use in methamphetamine production in that state.

North Dakota's proximity to Canada provides advantages for local laboratory operators and challenges to law enforcement authorities. Intelligence reports indicate that chemicals used to produce methamphetamine are likely transported into North Dakota from Canada. Precursor chemicals such as ephedrine, pseudoephedrine, and P2P are more readily available, less expensive, and regulated less restrictively in Canada than in the United States. Burke County Sheriff's Department officers report that there has been an influx of individuals with criminal records for methamphetamine production from California and other western states. These individuals are suspected of smuggling precursor chemicals across the U.S.–Canada border and producing methamphetamine in North Dakota.

Methamphetamine laboratories pose hazards to local residents, law enforcement officers, and other emergency response personnel. These laboratories contain highly flammable, toxic chemicals and vapors. Methamphetamine laboratories produce 5 to 7 pounds of toxic waste for every pound of methamphetamine produced. Toxic residue from methamphetamine production is dumped in the local area, contaminating groundwater and soil. Remediation of these laboratory sites costs federal, state, and local governments thousands of dollars every year. The national average cost of cleaning one site is $5,000; however, costs can exceed $100,000 for larger sites.

Transportation

Mexican criminal groups transport multipound quantities of methamphetamine into North Dakota. Officials from the North Dakota BCI and the DEA Fargo Resident Office report that these groups are the primary transporters of methamphetamine into North Dakota from source areas in

Mexico as well as California. Minnesota and Washington are distribution centers for methamphetamine transported to North Dakota. The Office of the State's Attorney and law enforcement officials in Fargo and Grand Forks agree that Mexican criminal groups are responsible for most of the Mexico-produced methamphetamine transported into their jurisdictions.

Eight Indicted for Transporting Methamphetamine and Cocaine

Eight individuals, ages 19 to 49, from North Dakota, Minnesota, and Washington were indicted for transporting methamphetamine and cocaine from Washington into Bismarck and Fargo, North Dakota, and Moorhead, Minnesota. The suspects transported 5 to 10 pounds of methamphetamine and 1 pound of cocaine from Washington during five trips from April to September 2000.

Source: U.S. Attorney's Office.

Bismarck Police officers report that some Mexican males—most of whom are in the United States illegally—transport an estimated 15 to 20 pounds of methamphetamine into their jurisdiction every 2 weeks via private vehicles licensed in California or Washington. Some of this methamphetamine likely is distributed throughout the state.

In 2000 an Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) investigation targeted a Mexican criminal group that used private vehicles to transport methamphetamine into the Fargo/Moorhead area. In July 2001 Grand Forks Area Narcotics Task Force officers seized 10 pounds of methamphetamine hidden in the gas tank of a private vehicle. Three Mexican males who were arrested in association with the seizure had transported the methamphetamine from Minneapolis, Minnesota, into Grand Forks.

Mexican criminal groups primarily use Interstates 29 and 94 to transport methamphetamine into the state. Interstate 29 connects the eastern cities in North Dakota to Sioux City, Iowa, and Omaha, Nebraska, which are methamphetamine distribution centers for the region, according to the Midwest High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area. Interstate 94 links North Dakota with interstates that extend to California, Minnesota, and Washington as well as Denver, Colorado. These groups also use US 2, 83, 85, and 281 as secondary routes to transport methamphetamine into North Dakota.

Transporters sometimes use other modes, such as package delivery services, tractor-trailers, and passenger trains, to transport methamphetamine into North Dakota. Officials from the Stutsman County Task Force report that in one methamphetamine investigation, transporters concealed the drug in stuffed animals and mailed them via package delivery services from California.

The Sons of Silence OMG also transports small amounts of methamphetamine for distribution in North Dakota, primarily from chapters in Colorado. Members of Colorado chapters transport Mexico-produced methamphetamine to North Dakota chapters, or North Dakota chapter members transport the drug from Colorado. Sons of Silence maintains chapters in Bismarck, Fargo, Grand Forks, and Minot.

Sons of Silence, with chapters in eight states, is the fifth largest OMG in the United States; total membership is estimated to be between 200 and 250. Sons of Silence maintains an alliance with Hells Angels, primarily due to their mutual rivalry with the Outlaws OMG. Sons of Silence is structured much like Hells Angels—each chapter maintains a self-governing hierarchy, which typically consists of a president, vice president, secretary-treasurer, and sergeant at arms.

Source: International Outlaw Motorcycle Gang Investigators Association.

Distribution

Mexican criminal groups transport methamphetamine and control the drug's wholesale distribution in North Dakota. DEA and state law enforcement agencies report that these groups distribute multiounce and larger quantities of methamphetamine in the state. When arrested, members of these groups are deported to Mexico, where they often obtain new identities and then return to the United States.

Caucasian and Native American local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of Mexico- and California-produced methamphetamine. Independent methamphetamine producers, primarily Caucasians, are the retail distributors of locally produced methamphetamine. Officials from the Metro Area and Northwest Narcotics Task Forces as well as the Stutsman and Ward County Task Forces report that Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary retail methamphetamine distributors in their jurisdictions. Officials from the North Dakota BCI report that Native American local independent dealers distribute methamphetamine at the retail level throughout the state. Dickinson Police Department and BCI officers indicate that local independent producers, who produce methamphetamine primarily for their own personal use, also are involved in the retail distribution of their product.

Mexican criminal groups often form associations with Native Americans to distribute methamphetamine. North Dakota BCI officers report that groups of Mexican migrant workers use Indian reservations as a place of refuge. Once there, the Mexican group members seldom leave the reservations to distribute drugs; rather, they employ Native Americans to distribute the drugs for them. These Native Americans then distribute the drugs to Caucasian abusers in cities such as Bismarck, Fargo, and Grand Forks. Caucasian abusers also go to the reservations to purchase methamphetamine. An investigator with the Turtle Mountain Reservation Drug Task Force identified four groups of Native Americans with ties to Mexican criminal groups.

> The Turtle Mountain Indian Reservation, located in Rolette County near the U.S.–Canada border, includes numerous roads and trails that provide easy access to the border. In May 2001 a methamphetamine distributor living on the Turtle Mountain Reservation was arrested as part of a major drug distribution network with connections to Montana, Oregon, South Dakota, and Washington. Eight individuals were arrested during the 3-year investigation.
>
> Source: Dickinson Police Department.

The Sons of Silence OMG also distributes methamphetamine at the retail level throughout North Dakota. It typically uses smaller, affiliated OMGs to distribute the drug at the retail level, which insulates it from law enforcement scrutiny, according to officials from the DEA Fargo Resident Office and the North Dakota BCI.

There are no specific locations within North Dakota cities in which to purchase user quantities of methamphetamine. Retail sales are arranged by word of mouth and take place in private residences. According to the BCI and the DEA Fargo Resident Office, if an individual wants to purchase user quantities of methamphetamine, that person must have a contact; there are no "cold buys."

Marijuana

Marijuana is the drug of choice and the most readily available drug in North Dakota. Treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities for marijuana abuse nearly doubled between 1994 and 1999. Marijuana availability also is increasing throughout the state, leading to corresponding increases in investigations, seizures, and arrests. Most of the marijuana seized in the state is produced in Mexico. High potency marijuana also is produced locally, primarily in small quantities indoors. Canada-produced marijuana is available as well. Mexican criminal groups transport multi-pound quantities of Mexico-produced marijuana through the southwestern states into North Dakota and distribute the drug at the wholesale level. Caucasian and Native American local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of Mexico-produced marijuana, while local producers distribute locally produced marijuana.

Abuse

Marijuana abuse is a significant problem in North Dakota. There are more treatment admissions for marijuana in North Dakota than for any other illicit drug. According to North Dakota health officials, treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities for marijuana abuse nearly doubled overall between 1994 and 1999. TEDS statistics show a sharp upward trend in treatment admissions from 186 in 1994 to 413 in 1998, then a decline to 361 in 1999. In North Dakota in 1999, males represented 76.7 percent of treatment admissions. In the same year, Caucasians represented 76.5 percent of treatment admissions, and 19.4 percent were Native American/Alaska Native. The age groups with the highest percentage of users—ages 15 to 17 and 21 to 25—accounted for 23.5 percent and 24.9 percent, respectively, of marijuana treatment admissions.

Marijuana use reported by North Dakota students is increasing. The 1999 North Dakota YRBS states that the percentage of students who reported using marijuana at least once in their lifetime increased from 26 percent in 1995 to 36 percent in 1999.

Table 2. Marijuana-Related Treatment Admissions to Publicly Funded Facilities North Dakota, 1994–1999

Year	Admissions
1994	**186**
1995	**226**
1996	**265**
1997	**306**
1998	**413**
1999	**361**

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set.

Availability

Marijuana availability is increasing throughout North Dakota. Mexico-produced and, to a lesser extent, locally produced marijuana are the most common types available; however, Canada-produced marijuana also is available. Marijuana seizures by North Dakota law enforcement officials nearly doubled from 258 pounds in 1993 to 507 pounds in 1999. According to the North Dakota BCI, annual seizures of Mexico-produced marijuana averaged 400 pounds each year from 1994

through 1997, while seizures averaged 500 pounds each year in 1998 and 1999. In 2001 Cass County law enforcement officials seized 43 pounds of Mexico-produced marijuana located in a storage facility in Fargo. The Cass County State's Attorney reported that this was one of the largest marijuana seizures in the past several years.

Marijuana-related arrests in North Dakota also indicate increasing availability. According to the North Dakota BCI, marijuana arrests increased overall from 48 in 1995 to 275 in 1999. Of those arrests, 14 in 1995 and 111 in 1999 occurred in the jurisdiction of the Minot Task Force, which reported the largest increase among all seven North Dakota task forces.

Increases in cannabis cultivation in Canada have begun to impact marijuana availability throughout North Dakota. Officials from the Burke County Sheriff's Department report that Canada is a source of marijuana transported primarily by private vehicles and tractor-trailers into their jurisdiction.

Relatively low and stable marijuana prices in North Dakota indicate the ready availability of marijuana in the state. The North Dakota BCI reports that marijuana prices statewide remained stable from 1998 through 2000. Officials from the DEA Fargo Resident Office also reported that prices for marijuana remained stable from 1998 through the second quarter of 2001: $8 to $10 per gram, $100 to $120 per ounce, and $800 to $1,000 per pound.

Violence

Although rare, violence associated with cannabis cultivation presents a concern for North Dakota law enforcement officials. Domestic cannabis growers often are armed and use booby traps and warning devices to protect grow sites from law enforcement authorities and intruders. During 2000 officials from the Cass County Sheriff's Department discovered countersurveillance equipment and booby traps associated with outdoor grows in their jurisdiction.

Production

Most of the marijuana available in North Dakota is produced in Mexico. Marijuana is also produced on a limited basis in the state. Canada-produced marijuana is available as well. According to the North Dakota BCI, local independent producers are the primary cannabis cultivators in the state. In addition to cannabis that is cultivated, feral hemp, also known as ditchweed, grows wild throughout North Dakota. During World War II hemp was cultivated in the state, and it continues to grow undetected in many parts of North Dakota. Ditchweed lacks sufficient levels of THC (tetrahydrocannabinol), the compound that gives marijuana its potency, to have value as an illicit drug; however, ditchweed is routinely harvested and mixed with higher-grade marijuana.

Producing High THC Cannabis

Cannabis cultivators sometimes employ intensive growing methods that include the use of heavily fertilized water, powerful lights, and high heat and humidity. Growers may also cultivate genetically improved plants. These efforts yield cannabis plants with high levels of THC. Every 90 days a single plant cultivated under conditions such as this can produce 1 pound of potent buds and leaves with an estimated street value of $4,000.

Source: U.S. Border Patrol.

Most of the locally grown cannabis is cultivated indoors. Officials from the North Dakota BCI report that cannabis cultivated indoors accounts for 80 percent of all seizures in the state.

Williston Police Department officers report that most of the cannabis they seize is grown indoors, primarily in basements equipped with grow lights. Stutsman County Task Force officers also report that most of the plants seized in their jurisdiction are from indoor grows. In 2000 officers from the Cass County Sheriff's Department reported that they had seized sophisticated hydroponic grows in their jurisdiction. In June 1999 a Fargo physician was arrested for cultivating cannabis indoors. Law enforcement officials confiscated over 80 cannabis plants from the physician's home. In January 2001 Dickinson Police Department officers uncovered the largest indoor cannabis operation yet in their jurisdiction; the investigation netted 40 cannabis plants.

Transportation

Mexican criminal groups transport most of the marijuana available in the state. These groups primarily use private vehicles to transport the drug from Mexico through the southwestern states into North Dakota, according to respondents to the NDIC National Drug Threat Survey 2001. They also use Chicago, Denver, and Minneapolis as distribution centers and receive direct shipments of pound, multipound, and kilogram quantities from Laredo, Brownsville, and Crystal City, Texas. An OCDETF investigation in 2000 targeted a Mexican criminal group that transported large quantities of marijuana in private vehicles from Denver into Bismarck, Devils Lake, and Grand Forks.

Local independent dealers transport small quantities of Mexico-produced marijuana into North Dakota. These dealers combine their resources to purchase the drug from Mexican criminal groups in Colorado and Washington. They then transport the marijuana into North Dakota, primarily by private vehicle. Northwest Narcotics Task Force and Williston Police Department officers report that Caucasian and Native American local independent dealers transport marijuana into their jurisdictions. Stutsman County and Metro Area Narcotics Task Force officers note that Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary marijuana transporters in their jurisdictions. According to Northwest Narcotics Task Force officers, the typical transportation method in their jurisdiction usually involves teams of five individuals who pool their money, send one member of the team to Denver to purchase marijuana, then divide it among the members for distribution in North Dakota.

In addition to private vehicles, local independent dealers also use package delivery and mail services to transport marijuana into the state. All North Dakota respondents to the NDIC National Drug Threat Survey 2001 reported that package delivery services are used to transport marijuana into North Dakota. Officers from the Metro Area, Northwest Narcotics, and Ward County Task Forces report that Caucasian and Native American local independent dealers transport marijuana from Colorado and Washington, primarily by private vehicles and package delivery services. In December 2000 Walsh County Sheriff's officers seized a package containing 25 pounds of marijuana after a tip from U.S. Postal Service officials.

Tractor-trailers, buses, and passenger train services provide alternative means of transporting marijuana into North Dakota.

Marijuana also is transported into North Dakota from Manitoba, Canada. Burke County Sheriff's Department officers report that Canada is a source of marijuana transported into their jurisdiction, primarily via private vehicles and tractor-trailers. Law enforcement officials throughout the northern states report that couriers are known to transport marijuana across the border in backpacks as well as seabags, duffel bags, and hockey bags. Couriers typically are paid $100 per pound of marijuana smuggled. Criminal groups operating from Canada make several trips a week transporting

marijuana into the United States and return to Canada with money, and, to a lesser extent, with cocaine and weapons. The extent to which this is occurring in North Dakota is unknown.

Distribution

Mexican criminal groups are the primary wholesale marijuana distributors in North Dakota. These groups transport the bulk of the marijuana available in the state and distribute the drug to Caucasian and Native American local independent dealers throughout the state. Federal and state law enforcement officials report that these groups use the same networks that distribute methamphetamine to supply wholesale amounts of marijuana to local independent dealers for retail distribution.

Caucasian and Native American local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of Mexico-produced marijuana, while local producers distribute locally and Canada-produced marijuana. Metro Area Narcotics Task Force and Bismarck Police Department officers report that Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary distributors of Mexico-produced marijuana, and local producers distribute locally produced marijuana in their areas. Officers from the Williston and Mandan Police Departments report that in their jurisdictions, Caucasian local independent dealers and, to a lesser extent, Native American local independent dealers are the primary distributors of marijuana at the retail level.

Law enforcement officials also report that Mexican criminal groups and Native American local independent dealers cooperate in marijuana retail distribution efforts. Their methods are similar to those associated with methamphetamine distribution—Native American local independent dealers distribute Mexico-produced marijuana to Caucasian abusers in cities such as Bismarck, Fargo, and Grand Forks. Caucasian abusers also go to the reservations to purchase marijuana.

Cocaine

In North Dakota powdered cocaine availability and abuse are stable at low levels, and crack cocaine availability and abuse are very limited. Pound and kilogram amounts of cocaine are not available in the state. The limited amount of crack that is available is converted locally by retail distributors. Mexican criminal groups transport small quantities of powdered cocaine from Mexico through the southwestern states and distribute it to local Caucasian and Native American independent dealers and African American street gangs. These independent dealers and street gangs also are involved in the retail distribution of crack cocaine.

Abuse

Cocaine abuse is less of a problem in North Dakota than methamphetamine or marijuana abuse. Treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities for cocaine abuse varied little for most of the 1990s. According to TEDS, from 1994 to 1998 North Dakota consistently ranked among the lowest in the nation for cocaine treatment admissions. TEDS statistics confirm that treatment admissions for cocaine remained relatively stable, fluctuating slightly each year from 17 in 1994 to 19 in 1999. (See Table 3 on page 14.) The Bismarck Police Department reports that cocaine abuse has decreased since 1998 in its jurisdiction. Treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities were fewer for smoked cocaine (crack) than for cocaine administered via other routes. In

1999, 5 admissions were reported for smoked cocaine compared with 14 associated with other routes of administration. From 1994 through 1999 admissions for other routes of administration outnumbered smoked cocaine admissions by more than two to one.

Young Caucasian adults are the primary abusers of smoked cocaine. In 1999 Caucasians accounted for 100 percent of smoked cocaine admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities; 80 percent were female and 20 percent were male. Sixty percent were ages 26 to 30, 20 percent were 18 to 20, and 20 percent were 15 to 17.

The 1999 North Dakota YRBS indicates that the percentage of students in North Dakota who reported lifetime use of cocaine was lower than the national percentage—8 percent compared with 10 percent.

Table 3. Cocaine-Related Treatment Admissions to Publicly Funded Facilities North Dakota, 1994–1999

Year	Admissions
1994	**17**
1995	**25**
1996	**27**
1997	**21**
1998	**25**
1999	**19**

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set.

Availability

Overall, the availability of powdered cocaine remains stable at low levels across the state. Powdered cocaine is available in small amounts in North Dakota's urban areas, while crack cocaine availability is limited to Fargo. There were only three federally prosecuted crack cocaine cases in North Dakota from 1995 through 2000. Officials from the Northwest Narcotics Task Force report that powdered cocaine is available in their jurisdiction but that supplies are very limited; they handle an average of one powdered cocaine-related case per year.

Despite relative stability, drug task force statistics for cocaine arrests increased overall from 6 in 1995 to 28 in 1999, peaking at 46 in 1998. From 1998 through 1999, statewide task force seizures of cocaine remained low and stable, at 3.3 kilograms in 1998 and 3.0 kilograms in 1999. According to U.S. Sentencing Commission statistics, the number of cocaine-related federal sentences declined overall from 17 in 1995 to 7 in 1999; there were no cocaine-related federal sentences imposed during 2000. In June 2001 Metro Area Narcotics Task Force officers reported that powdered cocaine availability was minimal and crack cocaine was not available in their jurisdiction. Responding to the NDIC National Drug Threat Survey 2000, officials from the Cass County Sheriff's Department reported that cocaine availability remained stable.

The price and purity of powdered cocaine also indicate that availability is stable in North Dakota. According to DEA Chicago Division reporting, the price and purity of powdered cocaine in Fargo have remained stable from FY1999 through the second quarter of FY2001. During that period powdered cocaine sold for $100 to $120 per gram and $1,000 to $1,500 per ounce. Pound and kilogram quantities of cocaine are not available in the state. The purity of powdered cocaine at the retail level in Fargo ranged from 30 to 70 percent.

Violence

There is little violence associated with cocaine distribution and abuse in North Dakota. Respondents to the NDIC National Drug Threat Surveys in 2000 and 2001 reported only a few incidents of violence related to the distribution or abuse of cocaine in North Dakota. Officials from the North Dakota BCI reported that few cases of cocaine-related violence occurred in North Dakota during 2000 and 2001. North Dakota law enforcement officials reported few problems associated with gang violence related to cocaine distribution.

Production

Coca is not cultivated nor is cocaine produced in North Dakota. Local Caucasian and Native American independent dealers as well as African American street gangs in the urban areas of North Dakota convert a very limited amount of powdered cocaine to crack. The conversion normally takes place in private residences.

Transportation

Mexican criminal groups transport small quantities of cocaine into North Dakota. The drugs typically are transported from Mexico through the southwestern states and then through distribution centers in Minneapolis and Denver. A 2000 OCDETF investigation targeted one of these groups that transported cocaine into the Fargo/Moorhead area from Mexico via Minneapolis. Other loosely knit groups also transport cocaine—although in even smaller amounts—and typically are composed of Caucasians, Hispanics, and Native Americans. These groups transport the drugs from major distribution centers in California, Colorado, and Washington.

Mexican criminal groups transport powdered cocaine into the state via I-29 and I-94. They also use US 2, 83, 85, and 281 as secondary routes. Metro Area Narcotics Task Force officers report that these groups transport cocaine into the area primarily by private vehicle from Mexico through the southwestern states. In Stutsman and Ward Counties, Mexican criminal groups transport cocaine via private vehicles and package delivery services.

Distribution

Mexican criminal groups distribute small quantities of powdered cocaine to local Caucasian and Native American independent dealers and African American street gangs. Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary cocaine retail distributors in the Stutsman County, Ward County, and Metro Area Narcotics Task Force jurisdictions. Officials from the North Dakota BCI report that Native American local independent dealers distribute retail amounts of powdered cocaine on Indian reservations as well as in Bismarck and Fargo.

Officials from the DEA Resident Office in Fargo report that Caucasian local independent dealers are the primary crack cocaine retailers in

Fargo and that African American street gangs also distribute crack cocaine in the city.

There are no specific locations within North Dakota cities in which to purchase user quantities of cocaine. Sales occur primarily in private residences or are arranged by word of mouth. According to officials from the BCI and the DEA Fargo Resident Office, if an individual wants to purchase user quantities of cocaine, that person must have a contact; there are no "cold buys." Due to the limited amount of powdered and crack cocaine available and the harsh climate in North Dakota, there are no open-air drug markets in the state.

Other Dangerous Drugs

Other dangerous drugs, including club drugs, hallucinogens, and diverted pharmaceuticals, appeal to a small segment of the population of North Dakota. Abuse of club drugs and hallucinogens occurs primarily in urban areas and is concentrated on high school and college campuses. Caucasian independent dealers are the primary transporters and distributors of club drugs and hallucinogens into and throughout North Dakota. The diversion and abuse of pharmaceuticals pose a growing threat to North Dakota.

Club Drugs

The club drug category includes stimulants such as MDMA (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) and depressants such as GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) and ketamine.

Club drugs are often distributed at raves, which occur on a limited basis in North Dakota. Most recent reporting indicates that raves are being held "underground." Rave promoters are primarily using the Internet to advertise these all-night dances. These events typically occur in rural areas inside carnival tents. Due to the harsh North Dakota climate, raves are seasonal, according to officers from the Cass County Sheriff's Office.

MDMA is a synthetic drug that acts simultaneously as a stimulant and mild hallucinogen. The drug has a slightly sweet scent and is usually ingested in tablet, powder, or capsule form. Other names for MDMA include ecstasy, Adam, X, E, XTC, and empathy. Users risk exhaustion from a combination of the drug's effects and the physical exertion of all-night dancing. The National Institute on Drug Abuse indicates that long-term use of MDMA causes significant, irreparable damage to the brain.

Raves

Throughout the 1990s high energy, all-night dances known as raves, which featured hard-pounding techno-music and flashing laser lights, increased in popularity among teens and young adults. Raves can be held either at permanent dance clubs or at temporary weekend event sites set up in abandoned warehouses, open fields, empty buildings, or civic centers. Club drugs, particularly MDMA, are often sold at raves and dance clubs. Rave managers often sell water, pacifiers, and glow sticks at rave parties. "Ravers" require water to offset dehydration caused by MDMA, use pacifiers to prevent the grinding of teeth (a common side effect of using MDMA), and wave glow sticks in front of their eyes because MDMA stimulates light perception.

Statistics document an increase in the use of MDMA and other club drugs throughout the nation, and this trend has reached North Dakota. According to officials from the BCI, MDMA abuse is increasing slowly throughout the state. Mandan Police Department officers report that

MDMA abuse is limited but increasing in their jurisdiction. According to officers from the North Dakota BCI and the Metro Area Narcotics Task Force, abuse in their jurisdictions occurs primarily among high school and college age students.

MDMA availability is increasing, primarily in North Dakota's urban areas. In September 2001 officials from the North Dakota BCI reported three MDMA seizures—of 20, 30, and 150 tablets, respectively. Officers from the Red River and Grand Forks Drug Task Forces report that MDMA availability is increasing, primarily in Fargo and Grand Forks, both college towns. Cass County Sheriff's Department officers note that MDMA is available in their jurisdiction, and they are seizing larger quantities of the drug than previously. Mandan Police Department and Burke County Sheriff's Department officers report that MDMA is available, primarily on college campuses.

There is no evidence that MDMA is produced in North Dakota. However, Canadian authorities seized record shipments of MDMA during 2000. Officials from the DEA Fargo Resident Office report that MDMA is transported from Canada to Grand Forks for retail distribution. Officers from the Burke County Sheriff's Department report that Caucasian males transport MDMA, primarily user quantities, from Canada by private vehicle to their jurisdiction.

High school and college age Caucasian males are the primary transporters and distributors of MDMA in North Dakota. Officials from the North Dakota BCI report that Minneapolis and Denver are sources of supply for MDMA. According to Metro Area Narcotics Task Force officers, some high school and college students pool their money, travel to Denver or Minneapolis to purchase MDMA, and transport it back to their high schools or colleges for retail distribution. Officials from the Cass County Sheriff's Department report that "hip-hop" groups and Caucasian dealers are the primary MDMA retail distributors. These officials also report that the retail distribution process involves three-person teams—the first person distributes the product, the second person collects the money, and the third person waits outside the club as a lookout. If law enforcement authorities challenge the lookout, his job is to "take the fall" and allow the other two members to escape. The team communicates through two-way radios and hand signals.

Hip-Hop Groups

Hip-hop groups are composed of individuals ages 15 to 24, primarily from Canada, South Dakota, Minnesota, and Illinois, who have an unkempt appearance and dress in a grunge style, which typically includes dirty, baggy clothing with rope belts. Group members illegally "hop" trains in order to make it to the next rave. They primarily distribute MDMA and, to a lesser extent, marijuana and methamphetamine. Hip-hop groups touring North Dakota and some of the state's high school students are now using heavy water—cigarettes that are immersed in embalming fluid and then smoked. Individuals who use heavy water are often disruptive and sometimes violent.

Source: Cass County Sheriff's Department.

GHB, also known as liquid ecstasy, soap, easy lay, Georgia homeboy, scoop, grievous bodily harm, liquid X, and goop, is a central nervous system depressant banned by the Food and Drug Administration in 1990. Originally sold in health food stores, GHB was marketed as a releasing agent for hormones that stimulate muscle growth. In recent years, it has become popular among young adults who attend raves. It also may be used to facilitate sexual assaults. It is odorless, tasteless, and virtually undetectable if added to a drink. Medical and law enforcement experts state that victims can lose consciousness within 20 minutes of ingesting GHB and often have no memory of events following ingestion. The drug inhibits the victim's ability to remember what occurred while under the influence of the drug. It is difficult to trace because it is usually eliminated from the body within 24 hours. At lower doses GHB causes drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, and visual disturbances. At higher doses unconsciousness, seizure, severe respiratory depression, and coma can occur.

GBL (gamma-butyrolactone), a chemical often used in industrial cleaners, is closely related to GHB. When ingested, GBL metabolizes into GHB. GBL is sold as a dietary supplement and marketed under a variety of exaggerated health claims, ranging from the treatment of insomnia to the reversal of baldness.

GHB availability and abuse are increasing, primarily in North Dakota's urban areas. Officers from the Mandan Police Department report that GHB abuse is currently low but is increasing in their jurisdiction. According to Cass County Sheriff's Department officers, GHB is available in their area, and they are seizing larger quantities.

There is no evidence of violent activity due to GHB abuse or retail distribution in North Dakota. Nevertheless, GHB has been used to facilitate sexual assaults in other states, and the potential exists for similar offenses to occur in North Dakota.

There is no evidence that GHB is produced in North Dakota. However, recipes for GHB are readily available via the Internet.

Caucasian males are the primary transporters and distributors of GHB in North Dakota. Officials from the Cass County Sheriff's Department report that the individuals who distribute MDMA use three-person teams to distribute GHB at the retail level.

Ketamine is an emerging threat to North Dakota. Officials from the North Dakota BCI report that ketamine was stolen in a number of veterinary clinic burglaries. Officials from the BCI further report that typically one or two clinics are burgled each year; however, more than 12 clinics were burgled in the first 10 months of 2001. Caucasian males are the primary distributors and abusers of ketamine in North Dakota.

Ketamine, also known as K, special K, and cat valium, is a dissociative general anesthetic for human and veterinary use. Ketamine liquid can be injected, applied to smokable material, or consumed in drinks. A powdered form is made by allowing the solvent to evaporate; the resulting white powder, once pulverized, looks very similar to cocaine. The powder can be put in drinks, smoked, or injected. Ketamine use approximates the physical effects of PCP (phencyclidine) and the visual effects of LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide). Users report a preference for ketamine over PCP or LSD because the ketamine trip lasts up to an hour. Use of the drug can cause delirium, amnesia, depression, long-term memory and cognitive difficulties, as well as fatal respiratory problems.

Hallucinogens

Hallucinogens available in North Dakota include LSD and psilocybin. The popularity of hallucinogens appears to have increased, and many agencies attribute the resurgence to the growing appeal of raves and dance clubs. Independent producers and suppliers are the primary sources of hallucinogens in North Dakota. Like club drugs, hallucinogens are distributed and used primarily by Caucasian young adults.

LSD, also known as acid, boomers, and yellow sunshines, is a powerful synthetic hallucinogen. The potency of the LSD available today (20 to 80 micrograms) is considerably lower than the levels of the 1960s and 1970s (100 to 300 micrograms). Production is time-consuming and complex, requiring some degree of expertise in chemistry. The primary precursor chemicals are either ergotamine tartrate or lysergic acid amide, both controlled by federal regulation. The effects of LSD are unpredictable and often depend on the dosage; the environment in which it is used; and the personality, mood, and expectations of the user. Users feel the effects within 30 to 90 minutes. The physical effects include dilated pupils; sweating; loss of appetite; sleeplessness; dry mouth; tremors; and increased heart rate, body

temperature, and blood pressure. LSD users report body numbness, weakness, trembling, and nausea. LSD typically is taken by mouth and is sold in tablet, capsule, and liquid forms as well as on pieces of paper (blotters) that have absorbed the drug.

North Dakota officials report an increase in LSD abuse among young adults, primarily due to its ready availability, affordable cost, and ease of concealment. Bismarck Police Department officers report that LSD abuse is increasing in their jurisdiction. Officers from the Metro Area Narcotics Task Force report that LSD abuse occurs primarily among high school and college age students. Dickinson Police Department officers also report an increase in LSD abuse. Officers have apprehended teenagers carrying small breath mint dispensers containing LSD. The teenagers dab their tongues with the dispenser when they want a "hit."

The availability of LSD is increasing, primarily in urban areas of North Dakota. Typically, LSD is produced in blotter paper form in laboratories in the San Francisco and Denver areas. LSD/hallucinogen seizures by the North Dakota BCI increased from 452 dosage units in 1994 to a record 5,280 units in 1995. In the years that followed, total seizure amounts fluctuated from 393 in 1996, 83 in 1997, 2,182 in 1998, 988 in 1999, to 281 in 2000. In addition, 150 grams of LSD/hallucinogens were seized in 1999 and 1 additional gram was seized in 2000 by the BCI. Officials from the Cass County Sheriff's Department report that LSD is available in their jurisdiction and that larger quantities are being seized. In Cass County prices range from $5 to $10 per dosage unit. According to Bismarck Police Department officers, in their jurisdiction LSD is available as a liquid and on sugar cubes.

Caucasian males are the primary transporters and distributors of LSD in North Dakota. Officials from the Cass County Sheriff's Department report that the same individuals who distribute MDMA and GHB distribute LSD, typically using three-person teams to conduct the sale. Metro Area Narcotics Task Force officers report that high school and college age students pool their resources, travel to distribution centers in Denver or Minneapolis to purchase LSD, and transport the drug to their schools or colleges. Stutsman County Task Force officers report that college students transport LSD from Montana into North Dakota.

Psilocybin is the active ingredient in some species of mushrooms frequently referred to as magic mushrooms or psychedelic mushrooms; potency varies widely. Independent growers cultivate mushrooms indoors and harvest those that grow wild. Doses normally range from 20 to 60 milligrams, and the effects generally last 5 to 6 hours.

Psilocybin availability is increasing in certain areas of North Dakota. Metro Area Narcotics Task Force officers report that psilocybin seizures increased overall from 5 grams in 1998 to 38 grams in 2000. Caucasian males are the primary transporters and distributors of psilocybin in North Dakota. Officers from the Cass County and Grand Forks Sheriff's Departments report that psilocybin is available in their jurisdictions and that they are seizing larger quantities. According to officers from the Northwest Narcotics Task Force, psilocybin availability is increasing. A task force officer reports that psilocybin cultivation has been discovered in the closets of some methamphetamine dealers' residences.

Diverted Pharmaceuticals

Diverted pharmaceuticals are becoming a threat to North Dakota residents. According to officers from the Mandan Police Department, diverted pharmaceutical abuse is an increasing problem. Grand Forks Sheriff's Department officers report that methamphetamine and cocaine abusers are increasingly abusing diverted pharmaceuticals. Officials from the Williston Police Department report that codeine is available for purchase over the counter in Canada, increasing its potential for abuse throughout the department's jurisdiction. Commonly diverted pharmaceuticals available throughout the state include Ritalin, OxyContin, Percocet, and Darvocet.

Ritalin acts as a stimulant and typically is prescribed for children diagnosed with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder. Abusers often grind Ritalin into a powder and snort it like cocaine or dilute and inject it like heroin.

OxyContin, Percocet, Percodan, and Tylox are trade names for the generic narcotic oxycodone hydrochloride. OxyContin in particular has a high abuse potential. Oxycodone is prescribed for relief of moderate to severe pain associated with dislocations and fractures and conditions such as bursitis, neuralgia, arthritis, lower back ailments, and cancer. It also is used postoperatively and after childbirth.

OxyContin abuse is increasing in North Dakota. The most common methods used to obtain the drug include prescription fraud and pharmacy burglary. Officers from the Bismarck Police Department and the Metro Area Narcotics Task Force report that OxyContin abuse is increasing throughout their jurisdictions. Officers from the Bismarck Police Department further report that abusers are writing fraudulent prescriptions, altering prescriptions, and even posing as doctors or nurses in order to obtain the drug.

Darvocet is a trade name for the generic narcotic propoxyphene hydrochloride. Propoxyphene is commonly prescribed for pain relief to people who have undergone surgery or who have serious injuries. Propoxyphene is a narcotic analgesic related to methadone and can be addictive. Common side effects associated with propoxyphene are drowsiness, dizziness, nausea, sedation, and vomiting. Symptoms of a propoxyphene overdose are a bluish tinge to the skin, convulsions, decreased or difficult breathing, decreased heart function, extreme sleepiness, irregular heartbeat, low blood pressure, pinpoint pupils, stupor, and coma.

Heroin

The availability and abuse of heroin are limited in North Dakota. The BCI reports very few heroin investigations. Law enforcement officials report that Mexican black tar heroin is the primary type available, although Mexican brown powdered heroin is occasionally available. Mexican criminal groups transport, distribute, and abuse most of the heroin available in North Dakota. However, in Fargo and Grand Forks these groups distribute heroin to Caucasian independent dealers who sell the drug at the retail level.

Abuse

Heroin abuse in North Dakota is stable at low levels. TEDS data indicate that heroin-related treatment admissions peaked at 14 in 1996 but decreased overall to 9 in 1999. (See Table 4 on page 21.) In North Dakota in 1999, males composed 66.7 percent of heroin treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities. In the same year 77.8 percent of treatment admissions were

Caucasian, while 11.1 percent were Native American/Alaska Native. The largest abuser age group—ages 31 to 35—accounted for 44.4 percent of heroin treatment admissions.

Despite the low number of treatment admissions, heroin abuse among North Dakota's youth was comparable to the national average. According to the 1999 North Dakota YRBS, 3 percent of North Dakota high school students admit lifetime heroin use compared with 2 percent of high school students nationwide.

Table 4. Heroin-Related Treatment Admissions to Publicly Funded Facilities, North Dakota 1994–1999

Year	Admissions
1994	**4**
1995	**8**
1996	**14**
1997	**9**
1998	**8**
1999	**9**

Source: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Treatment Episode Data Set.

Availability

There is little heroin available in North Dakota. Law enforcement agencies across the state report few heroin investigations or arrests. Investigations decreased from 12 in 1995 to 2 in 1999, and arrests decreased from 3 in 1995 to 2 in 1999. Seizures also decreased overall from 1996 to 1999: 724 grams were seized in 1996, while a total of 12 grams was seized from 1997 through 1999. U.S. Sentencing Commission data further substantiate the limited availability of heroin. From 1996 through 1999, only five federal sentences were imposed for heroin offenses in North Dakota. Officials from the Bismarck Police Department report that while there were indications of heroin availability in their jurisdiction, there were no heroin-related seizures or arrests in 2000. According to officials from the Metro Area Narcotics Task Force and the Mandan Police Department, heroin is not available in their jurisdictions.

Although its availability is limited, Mexican black tar heroin is the most common type of heroin in North Dakota. Mexican brown powdered heroin also is available but in very limited amounts. Black tar heroin is available only in the larger urban areas of eastern North Dakota, such as Fargo and Grand Forks. According to officials from the DEA Fargo Resident Office, black tar heroin prices remained stable in North Dakota from FY1999 through the second quarter of FY2001. Black tar heroin prices ranged from $350 to $600 per gram and $4,000 to $10,000 per ounce during this period. No prices were available for Mexican brown powdered heroin.

Violence

There are no indications of violence related directly to heroin distribution or abuse in North Dakota. Nonetheless, the highly addictive nature of heroin causes many abusers to resort to crime to obtain money to purchase the drug. Heroin abusers often commit theft and burglary in order to support their addiction.

Production

Opium is not cultivated nor is heroin refined in North Dakota. Heroin is produced in four source regions: Mexico, South America, Southeast Asia, and Southwest Asia. Most of the heroin available in North Dakota is produced in Mexico.

Transportation

Mexican criminal groups transport most of the heroin available in North Dakota. They transport heroin into North Dakota from Mexico. According to the North Dakota BCI, these groups are the primary heroin transporters in North Dakota. Officers from the Metro Area Narcotics Task Force confirm that Mexican criminal groups transport Mexican black tar heroin into the eastern part of the state.

To a lesser extent, Caucasian local independent dealers, OMGs, and local street gangs transport heroin into North Dakota. Officials from the Northwest Narcotics Task Force report that Caucasian local independent dealers transport heroin into their jurisdiction, while officers from the Cass County Sheriff's Department report that OMGs and local street gangs transport heroin into the county.

Mexican criminal groups transport heroin into North Dakota using the same routes and methods used to transport other illicit drugs. These groups primarily use I-29 and I-94 to transport drugs into the state. They also use US 2, 83, 85, and 281 as alternative routes to transport heroin into North Dakota. Law enforcement officials report that transporters primarily use private vehicles and package delivery services to transport heroin into North Dakota. Mexico is the primary source area for heroin transported into North Dakota, while Washington and Texas serve as transshipment points for heroin destined for the state.

To a lesser extent, local independent dealers, OMGs, and street gangs use routes and methods similar to those used by Mexican criminal groups to transport heroin into North Dakota. Local independent dealers use I-90 to I-94 to transport heroin from Washington, whereas OMGs typically use I-25 to I-94 to transport the drug from Denver, Colorado. Street gangs transport heroin from Minnesota via I-94. These dealers, OMGs, and gangs transport heroin primarily by private vehicle; package delivery services and commercial trains are used to a lesser extent.

Distribution

Mexican criminal groups distribute most of the heroin available in North Dakota. According to officials from the DEA Fargo Resident Office and the North Dakota BCI, Mexican criminal groups transport, distribute, and abuse most of the Mexican black tar heroin available in the state. However, in Fargo and Grand Forks these groups distribute heroin to Caucasian independent dealers who sell the drug at the retail level. Task force arrest statistics for North Dakota indicate that of the nine individuals arrested for heroin-related incidents from 1995 through 1999, all were Caucasian; seven of the nine were arrested in Grand Forks.

There are no specific locations within North Dakota cities in which to purchase user quantities of heroin. Sales are arranged by word of mouth or take place in private residences. According to officials from the BCI and the DEA Fargo Resident

Office, if an individual wants to purchase user quantities of heroin, that person must have a contact; there are no "cold buys." Due to the limited amount of heroin available and the harsh climate in North Dakota, there are no open-air drug markets in the state.

Outlook

Mexican criminal groups, the most significant criminal threat to the state, will continue to dominate the transportation and wholesale distribution of methamphetamine and marijuana into and throughout North Dakota.

Methamphetamine distribution and abuse will remain the most significant drug threat to North Dakota, and in-state methamphetamine production will continue to increase. The ready availability of anhydrous ammonia—a precursor used in the Birch reduction method—will facilitate increased methamphetamine production. The proximity to Canada also provides a possible source of pseudoephedrine and likely will contribute to an increase in local production in the state. As methamphetamine production expands throughout the state, toxic and hazardous waste will increase, taxing federal, state, and local resources involved in methamphetamine laboratory site cleanup.

There will continue to be a strong demand for Mexico-produced marijuana. The cultivation of cannabis in indoor operations will continue to increase, supporting rising demand in North Dakota. Growing techniques that can produce marijuana with THC levels well above 10 percent will potentially lead to an increase in marijuana's popularity and the number of growers lured by prospective profits. The availability of Canada-produced marijuana will also increase in all likelihood.

Abuse of powdered and crack cocaine will remain stable at low levels. Mexican criminal groups will continue to be the primary transporters of cocaine into the state, and sales will continue to be arranged through individual contacts and by word of mouth. The limited amount of crack that is available will continue to be converted locally by retail distributors. Powdered and crack cocaine will continue to present lower threats to the state than methamphetamine and marijuana.

The demand for other dangerous drugs will continue to increase throughout North Dakota. MDMA abuse is increasing in North Dakota, and high school and college age Caucasians will continue to be the primary abusers. The abuse of diverted pharmaceuticals will pose a growing threat to North Dakota.

Heroin availability and abuse will remain stable at very low levels. This drug will continue to present a lower threat to North Dakota than methamphetamine, marijuana, cocaine, or other dangerous drugs.

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Dickinson Police Department

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Grand Forks County Sheriff's Department

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Metro Area Drug Task Force

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Northwest Narcotics Task Force

Office of Attorney General
- Bureau of Criminal Investigation
  - Narcotics Division

Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area

State of North Dakota
- Department of Public Health
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