Intelligence Information Report

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(U//LES) New Mexico's Overdose Crisis: An Escalating Public Health and Public Safety Emergency

(U) Executive Summary

(U) New Mexico continues to face a serious and evolving drug overdose crisis that threatens the health, safety, and stability of communities throughout the state. Although substance abuse and drug related fatalities have affected New Mexico for decades, the presence of illicit fentanyl, increasingly dangerous drug combinations, and the continued availability of methamphetamine have intensified the problem. The consequences extend beyond individuals with substance use disorders, healthcare providers, schools, law enforcement agencies, and the criminal justice system.

(U) Recent overdose data demonstrates that New Mexico's crisis remains particularly troubling. The New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator has reported 797 fatal overdoses (provisional) for CY 2026 (January - September). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), New Mexico experienced an estimated 1,152 drug overdose deaths during the 12-month period ending June 2026, representing a 32.4 percent increase when compared with the previous year.[1] This increase is especially alarming because national overdose deaths declined during 2025 and into 2026. New Mexico is moving in the opposite direction from the national trend, which is very problematic. The increase underscores the need for a more aggressive intelligence driven approach to drug trafficking investigations and overdose prevention.

(U) The overdose crisis should be recognized not simply as a healthcare issue, but as a statewide public health, criminal justice, and public safety emergency requiring coordinated intervention.

[1] Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2026). Overdose Prevention Data Channel. https://www.cdc.gov/overdose-prevention/data-channel/

(U) Scope

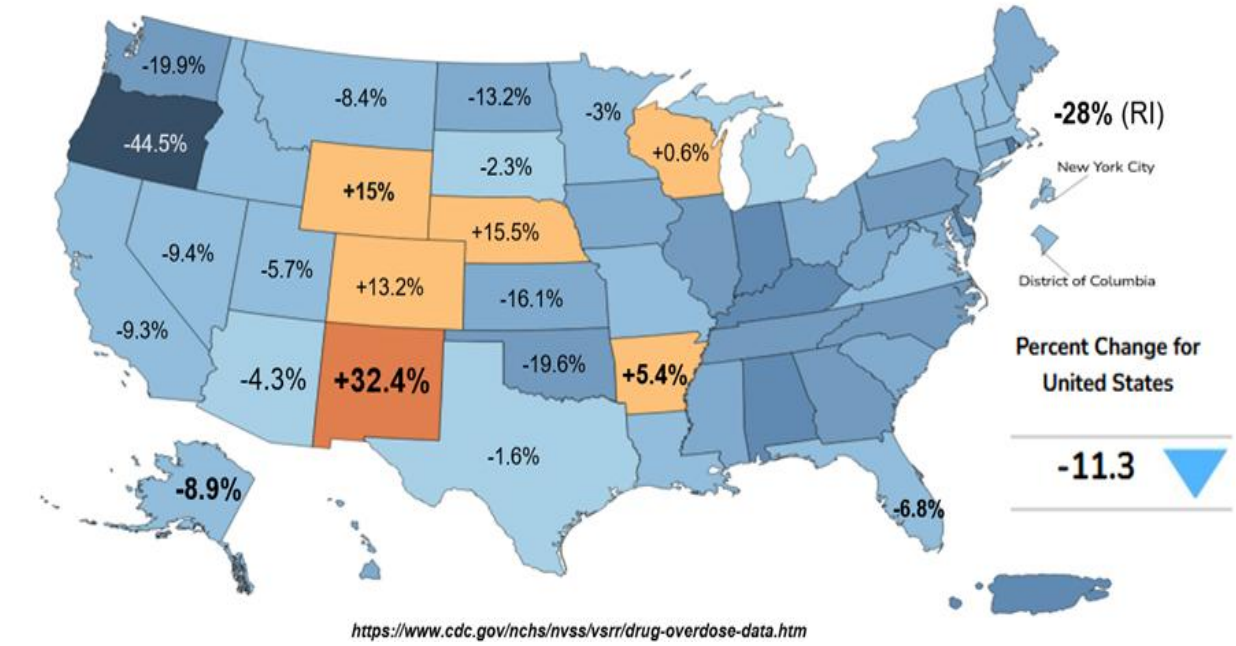
(U) New Mexico has historically experienced one of the highest drug overdose death rates in the United States. According to New Mexico Department of Health data, the states overdose death rate has remained among the highest nationally for much of the past two decades. Although overdose deaths declined following the state's 2021 peak, recent reporting indicates that progress has not been sustained. Preliminary data for CY 2026 from the Office of the Medical Investigator (OMI) shows a substantial resurgence in overdose fatalities. The increase demonstrates that existing prevention and intervention strategies, while worthwhile, have not sufficiently addressed the changing drug environment in New Mexico.

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(U) Source Summary Statement

(U) Reporting for this intelligence information report was derived from law enforcement reporting, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reporting, New Mexico Department of Health reporting, and open-source reporting. Information provided by the New Mexico Office of the Medical Investigator was critical and provided the basis for this bulletin. The New Mexico HIDTA investigative collection occurred between August 1, 2026 and November 18, 2026. The intelligence in this report was current as of November 19, 2026.

Percent Change in Predicted 12 Month-Ending Count of Drug Overdose Deaths by Jurisdiction; June 2025 to June 2026



Legend for Percent Change in Drug Overdose Deaths Between 12-Month Ending Periods



(U) Fentanyl and the Changing Drug Environment

(U) Illicit fentanyl is the most significant contributor to overdose fatalities in New Mexico. Its potency, availability, and presence, whether in pill form or powder form, create substantial risks for users ingesting fentanyl. In 2026 the concentrations of fentanyl as well as the adulterants mixed with fentanyl, have varied significantly in their different forms throughout the state according to New Mexico Department of Public Safety Forensic Laboratory personnel. "DEA laboratory testing indicates 29 percent of fentanyl pills analyzed during FY 2025 contained a potentially lethal dose, a significant drop from 76 percent of pills tested two years prior in FY 2023. Additionally, fentanyl powder purity decreased to 10.3 percent from 19.5 percent during the same time period[2]."

(U) An additional concern is the contamination or mixing of illicit substances. Recent drug overdose incident reporting has found that subjects have purchased what they believed to be cocaine, but actually unknowingly purchased and ingested fentanyl powder resulting in an overdose. Drug traffickers continue to adulterate, cut, and chemically modify fentanyl to maximize their profits, which has exponentially increased its lethality. This creates unpredictable risks and makes overdose prevention increasingly difficult.

(U) The changing drug supply presents challenges for law enforcement. Drug trafficking organizations continue to exploit transportation routes, distribution networks, and various social media platforms to move, distribute, and market illicit substances. New Mexico HIDTA drug task forces have identified significant fentanyl trafficking routes entering the state through Arizona and Texas, which demonstrate the need to investigate these regional distribution networks. New Mexico HIDTA provides the established framework to address these threats with federal, state, and local task forces. The availability of highly concentrated synthetic opioids means that relatively small quantities can contribute to significant numbers of overdoses and fatalities statewide.

(U) Methamphetamine and Polysubstance Abuse

(U) Although fentanyl receives considerable attention, methamphetamine remains a major contributor to New Mexico's substance abuse problem. OMI reporting has found that a significant number of fentanyl users also use methamphetamine. The combination of methamphetamine and opioids presents additional challenges for healthcare professionals, treatment providers, and law enforcement agencies. Methamphetamine in New Mexico continues to be readily available, cheap in price, and consistently high purity exceeding 95 percent according to forensic laboratory reporting.

(U) Polysubstance use, involving multiple drugs concurrently or within a short period of time, complicates overdose identification and treatment. Individuals may knowingly or unknowingly consume combinations of substances that increase the likelihood of severe medical complications or death.

[2] Cynthis Velazquez, United States Drug Enforcement Administration, DEA Launches Fentanyl Free America Initiative to Combat the Synthetic Drug Crisis, December 3,2025, https://www.dea.gov/press-releases/2025/12/03/dea-launches-fentanyl-free-america-initiative-combat-synthetic-drug-8

(U) The continued availability of methamphetamine, fentanyl, cocaine, and counterfeit prescription medications demonstrates that New Mexico's overdose crisis cannot be addressed through an opioid-only strategy. Prevention, treatment, and enforcement initiatives must account for the broader illicit drug market that exists in New Mexico.

(U) Geographic Impact and Community Vulnerabilities

(U) The overdose crisis affects communities throughout New Mexico, although some areas have experienced particularly significant increases. Rio Arriba, Santa Fe, and Taos counties have reported substantial numbers of overdose deaths and emergency department visits as a result of overdose incidents. Some of the rural areas within the state may experience additional challenges because of limited treatment availability, transportation barriers, fewer healthcare resources, and geographic distances between emergency response services.

(U) However, the impact of overdose incidents is not limited to rural communities. Urban areas like Bernalillo County and Dona Ana County also face challenges associated with drug trafficking, repeat overdose incidents, and the demand placed on emergency response systems.

(U) Implications for Law Enforcement and Public Safety

(U) The overdose crisis has significant implications for law enforcement agencies throughout New Mexico. Officers frequently encounter individuals experiencing overdoses, respond to complaints involving drug activity, conduct investigations targeting drug trafficking organizations, and investigate drug related deaths. These responsibilities place considerable demands on personnel and agency resources. Officers may encounter fentanyl and other dangerous substances during investigations, traffic stops, searches, and evidence collection. Agencies must ensure personnel receive appropriate training regarding exposure risks, personal protective equipment, and overdose response procedures.

(U) Law enforcement agencies must also strengthen intelligence-sharing capabilities to identify emerging drug trends, distribution networks, trafficking organizations, and geographic areas experiencing increases in overdose activity.

(U) The collection and analysis of drug related intelligence can help agencies identify patterns involving:

- Fentanyl and methamphetamine trafficking.
- Counterfeit prescription medications.
- Drug trafficking organizations and transportation routes.
- Changes in drug availability, price, and potency.
- Geographic concentrations of overdose incidents.
- Repeat overdose locations and individuals.
- Emerging substances and drug combinations.

(U) Improved coordination between local, state, federal, and tribal law enforcement agencies is essential. Intelligence sharing can help identify connections between overdose incidents and larger trafficking operations while supporting more effective investigations and resource allocation. These enforcement efforts should complement prevention and treatment initiatives rather than operate independently.

(U) Prevention, Treatment, and Harm Reduction

(U) Addressing New Mexico's overdose crisis requires a comprehensive strategy that combines prevention, treatment, harm reduction, and enforcement.

(U) One of the most effective interventions is expanding access to naloxone, commonly known by the brand name Narcan. Naloxone can reverse an opioid overdose and provide an opportunity for an individual to receive emergency medical treatment. Increasing its availability among law enforcement officers, emergency responders, healthcare providers, schools, and community organizations can help prevent unnecessary fatalities.

(U) Medication assisted treatment (MAT) for opioid use disorder is another essential component. Medications such as buprenorphine, methadone, and naltrexone can reduce cravings, support recovery, and lower the risk of fatal overdose. New Mexico has taken steps to expand access to MAT through public health offices and other treatment providers. However, continued investment is necessary to address barriers involving availability, transportation, affordability, and continuity of care.

(U) Prevention programs must also focus on public awareness. Communities should understand the dangers associated with counterfeit prescription medications, fentanyl, and other illicit substances. Schools, community organizations, and public safety agencies can play an important role in educating residents and identifying individuals who may need assistance.

(U) Recommendations for Coordinated Statewide Response

(U) New Mexico must adopt a coordinated approach that recognizes the relationship between drug trafficking, substance use, overdose incidents, and public safety.

(U) The following recommendations should be considered:

- **(U) Strengthen Intelligence Sharing**
  (U) Establish and maintain coordinated intelligence-sharing mechanisms among local, state, federal, and tribal agencies. Information regarding emerging drug trends, trafficking organizations, overdose locations, and suspected drug distribution networks should be shared in a timely manner.

- **(U) Expand Fentanyl and Methamphetamine Investigations**
  (U) Prioritize investigations targeting significant drug trafficking organizations responsible for distributing fentanyl, methamphetamine, and counterfeit prescription medications.

Investigative resources should focus on identifying distribution networks and individual's responsible for supplying these dangerous substances.

- **(U) Improve Overdose Data Collection**
  (U) Develop consistent reporting procedures for fatal and non-fatal overdoses. Information should include location, suspected substance(s), demographic information, and emerging drug trends. Timely reporting will allow agencies to identify overdose spikes and prepare public health and public safety resources to respond and notify the community of contaminants in the drug supply. ODMAP is a syndromic surveillance tool used to track suspected drug overdoses in real-time nationwide and is available free of charge to all public health and public safety agencies. This is a valuable tool that could be leveraged to prevent additional fatalities. Currently, eight states have legislative mandates regarding overdose data submission to ODMAP and an additional 20 voluntarily submit all overdose data. New Mexico HIDTA is currently participating in a bipartisan fentanyl working group to address the on-going crisis.

- **(U) Expand Naloxone Availability and Training**
  (U) Ensure law enforcement officers, first responders, and community partners have access to naloxone and receive appropriate training regarding its use. Overdose response should be a priority for all public safety agencies.

- **(U) Increase Access to Substance Use Treatment**
  (U) Expand access to evidence-based treatment, particularly in rural and underserved communities. Strengthen partnerships between law enforcement, healthcare providers, behavioral health organizations, and community-based treatment programs.

- **(U) Establish measurable Performance Indicators**
  (U) Federal, state, and local agencies should establish measurable performance indicators to evaluate the effectiveness of overdose prevention and enforcement initiatives. Potential measures include overdose fatalities, non-fatal overdose incidents, naloxone administrations, treatment referrals, drug trafficking investigations, and the identification of emerging threats.

- **(U) Strengthen Public Awareness Campaigns**
  (U) Develop coordinated public education initiatives addressing illicit substances (i.e., fentanyl, methamphetamine, counterfeit medications, and polysubstance abuse). These efforts should emphasize the dangers of consuming substances from unregulated sources.

(U) Conclusion

(U) New Mexico's overdose crisis represents one of the most significant public health and public safety challenges facing the state. The recent increase in overdose fatalities, especially against a backdrop of declining national overdose deaths, demonstrates the urgency of developing a more comprehensive and coordinated response.

(U) Fentanyl, methamphetamine, counterfeit prescription medications, and polysubstance abuse continue to threaten individuals and communities throughout New Mexico. The consequences extend beyond overdose fatalities and include increased demands on law enforcement, emergency medical services, hospitals, treatment providers, and the criminal justice system.

(U) Addressing this crisis requires more than isolated enforcement operations or temporary prevention campaigns. New Mexico must strengthen intelligence sharing, disrupt drug trafficking organizations, expand access to treatment, improve overdose surveillance, and increase the availability of lifesaving interventions.

(U) Ultimately, success should be measured not only by the number of drug trafficking organizations disrupted or arrests made, but also by reductions in overdose deaths, fewer repeat overdose incidents, increased treatment access, and safer communities.

(U) The current trends should serve as a call to action for state leadership, law enforcement executives, public health officials, and community stakeholders. A sustained, coordinated, and intelligence-driven response is essential to reversing the overdose crisis and protecting the citizens of New Mexico.

(U) Please contact the New Mexico HIDTA Investigative Support Center at nmisc@nmhidta.org or Project Analyst Shannon Martin (575)528-9329 with any questions or concerns.

We value your opinion and would like to invite you
To participate in our short two question survey.

Please click the link below:

IIR-2026 -003 New Mexico's Overdose Crisis Survey