



# Florida

## Drug Threat Assessment



National Drug Intelligence Center  
U.S. Department of Justice

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Product No. 2003-S0381FL-001  
July 2003

# **Florida Drug Threat Assessment**

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## Preface

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This report is a strategic assessment that addresses the status and outlook of the drug threat to Florida. 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 Florida.

# Florida Drug Threat Assessment

## Executive Summary

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Florida, particularly South Florida, is a national transportation hub and distribution center for illicit drugs. The state's well-developed transportation infrastructure and proximity to source countries make it ideally suited for the movement of licit and illicit goods. Drugs transported by private vehicle, commercial truck, aircraft, maritime vessel, railcar, and package delivery services have an excellent chance of reaching their destinations because of the volume of traffic moving to and through the state daily.

**Cocaine**, both powdered and crack, poses a serious threat to Florida. The drug is readily available, commonly abused, and its distribution and abuse are more often associated with violent crime than any other illicit drug in the state. Florida is the primary destination for cocaine smuggled from South America through the Caribbean and into the United States. South Florida and, to a lesser extent, Jacksonville and Tampa serve as regional transportation hubs and transshipment points for multikilogram to multihundred-kilogram quantities of cocaine generally destined for distribution in states east of the Mississippi River. Colombian drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups control cocaine transportation to the state; however, they usually rely on Bahamian, Cuban American, Dominican, Haitian, Jamaican, Puerto Rican, and other Caribbean criminal groups to transport cocaine into Florida. Maritime vessels are the primary conveyances used to transport cocaine into Florida. Colombian drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine in Florida. The primary criminal groups and gangs that distribute wholesale quantities of crack cocaine in Florida vary by area and include Haitian and Jamaican criminal groups, African American and Hispanic gangs, and local independent Caucasian dealers. Various criminal groups, African American and Hispanic gangs, and Caucasian and African American local independent dealers are the dominant retail distributors of powdered and crack cocaine in Florida. Powdered cocaine often is packaged in plastic bags and distributed at open-air drug markets, private residences, some businesses and offices, parties, nightclubs, and raves or techno parties. Crack cocaine usually is packaged in small plastic bags and distributed at open-air drug markets.

**Heroin** poses a threat to Florida. The drug is readily available, frequently abused, and the distribution of heroin is occasionally associated with violent crimes such as assault, drive-by shooting, and homicide. South American heroin is most prevalent;

however, Mexican black tar heroin and brown powdered heroin also are available, although to a limited degree. Southeast and Southwest Asian heroin are rarely available in Florida. Miami and, to a lesser extent, Orlando are among the primary transportation hubs and transshipment points for South American heroin smuggled into the United States. Colombian drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups control the transportation of South American heroin into Florida using Colombian, Dominican, Jamaican, Puerto Rican and, to a lesser extent, Mexican criminal groups. South American heroin generally is transported into Florida by air, although maritime and overland conveyances also are used. Mexican criminal groups are the dominant transporters of Mexican black tar and Mexican brown powdered heroin into Florida. These groups generally transport the drug into the state in private vehicles and via package delivery services. Colombian criminal groups control the wholesale distribution of South American heroin in Florida; Puerto Rican and Dominican criminal groups, African American and Hispanic gangs, and various local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors. Wholesale quantities of Mexican black tar or brown powdered heroin rarely are available in Florida. Mexican and Puerto Rican criminal groups, Hispanic and African American gangs, and local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of Mexican black tar and brown powdered heroin in Florida. Retail quantities of heroin usually are packaged in bindles (approximately one-tenth gram folded in tinfoil) and sold at open-air drug markets, from residences and parked vehicles, and in nightclubs, bars, and other clubs. Retail distributors also sell heroin to known associates and often use pagers to arrange meetings with customers.

**Methamphetamine** poses a serious and increasing threat to Florida and is a major public health problem in some areas of the state. The drug is frequently available and abused in rural areas and is increasingly available and abused in suburban and metropolitan areas. Methamphetamine production, distribution, and abuse often are associated with violent crime. In central Florida, an area that historically has had a significant methamphetamine problem, the availability and abuse of the drug have spread outward from Polk County. Most of the methamphetamine available in this area is produced in high volume laboratories in California, Mexico, and southwestern states using the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method. Significant quantities of methamphetamine available in Polk and surrounding counties are produced locally, primarily using the Birch reduction method. In northern Florida the number of methamphetamine laboratories has increased as users have learned how to produce the drug. Locally produced methamphetamine is increasingly available and abused in this area, although an increasing amount of methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states also is available in the state. In southern Florida crystal methamphetamine is frequently seen in clubs and used in combination with other drugs, including MDMA. Mexican drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups, the dominant transporters of methamphetamine, usually smuggle the drug in commercial and private vehicles into Florida from California, Mexico, and southwestern states. Methamphetamine also is transported into the state via couriers on commercial aircraft and via package delivery services from California, Mexico, and southwestern states. Mexican drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups dominate the wholesale distribution of methamphetamine statewide. They typically sell pound quantities of methamphetamine to Caucasian

and Mexican criminal groups who then sell ounce quantities to local independent Caucasian and Mexican dealers, the dominant retail distributors in the state. Street gangs such as Latin Kings, Vice Lords, and Sureños 13 also distribute retail quantities of methamphetamine in Florida. Retail quantities (1 gram to one-quarter gram) of methamphetamine usually are packaged in small plastic bags and sold on street corners and at open-air drug markets, private residences, bars, housing projects, mobile home parks, and occasionally at raves or techno parties.

**Marijuana** is the most widely available and frequently abused illicit drug in Florida. Most of the marijuana available in Florida is produced in Jamaica or Mexico. Significant quantities of marijuana also are produced in Florida and other U.S. states—particularly California and southwestern states—as well as in Canada and Colombia. Marijuana frequently is smuggled to Florida from Jamaica aboard maritime vessels, on private or commercial aircraft, or via package delivery services. Marijuana also is transported from Canada, Mexico, and southwestern states in private vehicles, trucks, via package delivery services, and by couriers or air cargo shipments on commercial airlines. Colombian drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups or groups working on their behalf use the same methods to transport marijuana south from New York into Florida and use couriers or cargo shipments on commercial airlines to smuggle marijuana from South America. Jacksonville and Miami are regional distribution centers for wholesale and retail quantities of marijuana. Jamaican and Mexican criminal groups are the most prominent wholesale distributors of marijuana in Florida; however, no specific organization or group controls wholesale marijuana distribution in the state. Jamaican, Mexican, African American, Caucasian, Cuban and other Caribbean criminal groups; local independent African American and Caucasian dealers; and gangs such as Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, Vice Lords, and Sureños 13 are the most prominent midlevel and retail distributors of marijuana in the state. At the retail level marijuana usually is packaged in plastic bags for \$5 and \$10—known, respectively, as nickel and dime bags—and distributed at low-income housing areas, open-air drug markets, and in economically depressed rural areas in Florida. Marijuana also is sold to established contacts at bars and nightclubs, from some businesses and private homes, and on college, high school, and middle school campuses.

**MDMA** (also known as ecstasy, Adam, E, X, and XTC) frequently is widely available and abused in Florida. The drug is most prevalent in or near large metropolitan areas including Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando, and Tampa and in cities with major colleges or universities such as Gainesville and Tallahassee. MDMA increasingly is available in smaller cities and towns throughout the state. Most MDMA available in Florida is produced in the Netherlands and Belgium; however, MDMA sometimes is produced locally. Israeli and Russian drug trafficking organizations and criminal groups are the dominant transporters of MDMA into Florida. Western European, Caribbean, Colombian, Dominican and, to a lesser extent, U.S.-based Caucasian criminal groups also transport significant quantities of MDMA into Florida. Most of the MDMA transported into Florida is smuggled from source or transit countries by couriers on passenger airlines or via package delivery services. MDMA occasionally is smuggled aboard maritime vessels arriving from foreign countries, by air freight, or is transported in commercial and private vehicles from other states. South Florida is a regional distribution center for wholesale quantities of MDMA. Israeli, Russian, Colombian, and Western European drug trafficking

organizations and criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of MDMA in Florida. Dominican, other Caribbean and, to a lesser extent, U.S.-based Caucasian criminal groups also distribute wholesale quantities of MDMA in Florida. Wholesale distributors typically supply multithousand-tablet quantities of MDMA to midlevel distributors who, in turn, supply up to multihundred-tablet quantities to retail distributors. Local independent Caucasian dealers are the primary retail distributors of MDMA in Florida; however, African American criminal groups, gangs, and local independent dealers are increasingly involved in the retail distribution of MDMA. Distributors are usually middle- and upper-class Caucasian teenagers and young adults who often abuse MDMA as well. They typically distribute MDMA tablets at raves or techno parties, private parties, nightclubs, and on high school and college campuses.

**Other dangerous drugs** such as GHB, LSD, ketamine, and diverted pharmaceuticals are available and abused in Florida, but to a lesser extent than cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, marijuana, and MDMA. However, most federal, state, and local law enforcement officials report that the rate of abuse of these dangerous drugs, particularly pharmaceuticals, is increasing more rapidly than for any other drug. Oxycodone, primarily OxyContin, is one of the most commonly diverted pharmaceuticals in Florida. Hydrocodone (Vicodin), hydro-morphone (Dilaudid), and benzodiazepines (Xanax, Valium, and Rohypnol) also are diverted and abused. Diverted pharmaceuticals typically are sold to acquaintances and established customers. Local independent Caucasian dealers, often middle-class suburban teenagers and young adults, generally are the primary distributors and abusers of most other dangerous drugs in Florida. Hallucinogens such as LSD and ketamine and depressants such as GHB and its analogs generally are sold at raves or techno parties, dance clubs, gyms, nightclubs, private parties, high school and college campuses, and over the Internet.

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Florida.

Note: This map displays features mentioned in the report.



# Florida Drug Threat Assessment

## Overview

With over 16 million residents, Florida is the fourth most populous state in the nation. Over 10 million individuals, approximately 63 percent of Florida’s population, reside in the counties encompassing Florida’s 12 largest metropolitan areas. Five million individuals reside in Broward, Miami-Dade, and Palm Beach Counties in southern Florida. The largest metropolitan areas are ethnically diverse. This ethnic diversity, coupled with a high population density, allows members of Colombian, Dominican, Mexican, Jamaican, and other foreign drug trafficking organizations (DTOs) and criminal groups to blend easily with law-abiding members of the community. Further, large portions of the state are rural and agricultural in nature—ideal sites for the production of methamphetamine and the cultivation of cannabis.

Florida’s proximity to drug-producing and transshipment countries and its well-developed transportation infrastructure make it an ideal gateway for the movement of both licit and illicit goods into and through the United States. Drug transporters frequently use maritime vessels, commercial and private aircraft, and package delivery services to smuggle illicit drugs into Florida. They also use commercial trucks and private vehicles and, to a lesser extent, buses and railcars to transport drugs into the state. Many of

Fast Facts	
	Florida
Population (2001)	16.4 million
U.S. population ranking	4th
Median household income (2000)	\$37,998
Unemployment rate (2000)	3.6%
Land area	53,927 square miles
Shoreline	8,426 miles
Inland water	11,761 square miles
Capital	Tallahassee
Other principal cities	Fort Lauderdale, Jacksonville, Orlando, Miami, St. Petersburg, Tampa
Number of counties	67
Principal industries	Agriculture, banking, government, retail services, tourism

these conveyances also are used to transport illicit drugs from Florida to other states and cities—

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particularly New York and Atlanta—that serve as major transportation hubs and distribution centers for various illicit drugs.

Florida has 14 major deepwater ports on the Gulf and Atlantic coasts. It ranks second among the U.S. states for having the longest shoreline and third for having the most square miles of inland water. Longshoremen at Gulf ports primarily process domestic cargo, while those on the Atlantic coast primarily process international cargo. In 2001, 60 percent of all U.S. trade with Central America, 46 percent with Caribbean nations, and 27 percent with South America flowed through the Port of Miami. The term trade refers to the dollar value of goods that pass through the port. Over 2.5 million containers passed through Florida’s ports in fiscal year (FY) 2001. Miami ranked first in the state in the number of containers handled that year. The Port of Tampa, which specializes in bulk cargo, is the busiest seaport in Florida in terms of total cargo tonnage and handles nearly half of all seaborne cargo passing through the state. It is the eighteenth busiest port in the country and twenty-fifth busiest in the world in terms of foreign cargo tonnage. Longshoremen at the port processed almost 46.5 million tons of cargo, including 15.0 million tons of foreign goods in 2000, the most recent year for which these data are available. Further, longshoremen processed 22.5 million tons of cargo at Port Everglades (Fort Lauderdale) and 19.7 million tons of cargo at Jacksonville, the next two busiest seaports in Florida in terms of total cargo tonnage.

<b>Florida Seaports</b>	
Fort Pierce	Pensacola
Jacksonville	Port Canaveral
Key West	Port Everglades
Manatee	Port Fernandina
Miami	Port St. Joe
Palm Beach	St. Petersburg
Panama City	Tampa

DTOs and criminal groups frequently smuggle large quantities of illicit drugs from source and transit countries to Florida via maritime conveyances, primarily in containerized cargo vessels,

coastal freighters, and go-fast boats. Fishing vessels, bulk freighters, cruise ships, and other commercial and private watercraft also are used. U.S. Customs Service (USCS) officials in Florida seized over 44.2 metric tons of illicit drugs aboard maritime vessels in 2001. Drugs smuggled aboard commercial vessels often are intermingled with legitimate goods such as fruit, vegetables, detergent, coffee, and seafood inside shipping containers or concealed within the walls of the container itself. Drugs smuggled aboard coastal freighters or bulk cargo ships are typically concealed in false compartments and fuel tanks. Several different types of maritime vessels are used to smuggle a single drug shipment. Coastal freighters, generally used in South Florida and the Florida Keys, often serve as “motherships” from which large shipments of drugs, primarily cocaine or marijuana, are offloaded at sea to smaller vessels such as go-fast boats and commercial or private fishing vessels. Smaller vessels then typically transport the drugs directly into Florida.

Five seaports in Florida—Port of Miami, Port Everglades, Port of Tampa, Key West, and Port Canaveral—handle a significant amount of cruise ship traffic daily. In FY2001 almost 12 million individuals arrived and departed on cruise ships in Florida. Of those, approximately 7 million cruise ship passengers used the Port of Miami and Port Canaveral that year. Miami often is referred to as the cruise capital of the world because approximately 17 cruise ships dock in Miami harbors. Most cruise ships depart from Florida for destinations in the Caribbean, a major drug transshipment area for cocaine and South American heroin destined for distribution in the United States. Various law enforcement officials report that some passengers or crew members aboard cruise ships transport drugs—usually concealed on their person or in their luggage—to Florida.

Florida has 131 public airports—13 international—and over 700 private airports, airstrips, heliports, and seaplane bases. Millions of passengers and large amounts of cargo transit the major airports each year. Fifty-six percent of scheduled, international flight departures each week are to destinations in the Caribbean;

30 percent are to destinations in Central America, Mexico, or South America. Other destinations include Europe and Canada. Miami International Airport is the twelfth busiest airport in the United States in terms of passengers, with over 36 million passenger arrivals and departures annually, and fourth busiest in terms of cargo, with 1.8 million metric tons processed annually. Drugs, particularly cocaine, heroin, and MDMA, often are transported to Florida by couriers or intermingled with legitimate cargo on commercial flights from drug source and transshipment countries or from other states. Operation Jetway data indicate that in 2001 law enforcement officials in Florida seized almost 616.4 kilograms of illicit drugs from packages and couriers arriving on commercial airplanes, primarily from states such as California and Texas. USCS officials in Florida seized almost 3,000 kilograms of drugs from commercial and private aircraft and over 165 kilograms from packages in 2001. (Some of these seizures also were reported as part of Operation Jetway statistics.) In addition, county and local law enforcement agencies seize significant quantities of illicit drugs but do not report seizure totals as part of Operation Jetway or to USCS.

#### **Operation Jetway**

Operation Jetway is a domestic interdiction program supported by the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC). Drug seizures are reported to Operation Jetway by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies across the nation at airports, train stations, bus stations, package shipment facilities, U.S. Post Offices, and airport hotels and motels.

Hundreds of small, unregulated airstrips on ranches and in fly-in communities in Florida are well within flight range of drug transshipment countries in the Caribbean. Drug transporters often use these small, mostly unmonitored airstrips to smuggle drugs into the state. Drug transporters also occasionally airdrop drugs from private aircraft to vessels at sea for further transport to Florida.

#### **Pilot Program in Orange County**

In 2001 the Florida Legislature authorized the creation of a 3-year pilot program in Orange County to intercept illicit drugs sent via package delivery services. It designated the Orange County Sheriff's Office, which had previously created its own interdiction program, to create and supervise the pilot program. The Parcel Interdiction Team services 200 to 250 package and freight delivery locations within Orange County. From January 2001 to February 2002, the Parcel Interdiction Team seized 2 tons of marijuana, almost 2.7 kilograms of methamphetamine, 1.5 kilograms of cocaine, 500 OxyContin tablets and various quantities of hydrocodone, Xanax, and other illicit drugs, with a combined street value of over \$9.2 million.

Source: Orange County Sheriff's Office.

A maze of roadways including Interstates 4, 10, 75, 95, and Florida's Turnpike are used for licit and illicit purposes. Interstate 4 intersects with I-75 near Tampa, crosses Orlando and other central portions of the state, then intersects I-95 near Daytona Beach. Interstate 10 extends from the Los Angeles area east through southwestern and Gulf Coast states and through Pensacola to Jacksonville, where it connects with I-95. Interstate 75 runs from Miami through Atlanta, Knoxville, Cincinnati, and Detroit and extends to the U.S.–Canada border. Interstate 95, the principal north-south highway on the East Coast, extends from Miami north through many major East Coast cities to the U.S.–Canada border. Florida's Turnpike extends from I-75 south of Ocala to Fort Pierce on the Atlantic Coast before turning south and paralleling I-95 into Miami. Criminal groups frequently use these highways to transport drugs into and through Florida in commercial and private vehicles. Drugs usually are concealed in false compartments or among legitimate goods such as produce, furniture, or other items in commercial vehicles or concealed in baggage in trunks or false compartments built into private vehicles. USCS officials in Florida seized over 5,500 kilograms of drugs from commercial and private vehicles in 2001. Over 527 kilograms of

drugs, primarily cocaine, heroin, and marijuana, were seized on Florida roadways as part of Operation Pipeline in 2001.

**Operation Pipeline**

Operation Pipeline is an EPIC-supported national highway interdiction program. Drug seizures are reported to Operation Pipeline by federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies nationwide operating along highways and interstates most frequently used to transport illicit drugs and drug proceeds.

Various passenger and freight train services are available in Florida, and drug transporters occasionally use those services to transport drugs into and through the state. Amtrak offers rail services from Florida to New York daily. Eleven railroads, many based at major seaports in the state, provide freight service on the state’s 2,887-mile rail system and connections to an extensive network of freight lines servicing various areas of the country. Operation Jetway data indicate that in 2001 law enforcement officials in Florida seized over 28 kilograms of drugs, primarily cocaine and marijuana that were being transported on passenger trains.

Large commercial bus lines and smaller bus companies facilitate the interstate and intrastate transportation of individuals and goods. There are over 120 commercial bus terminals in Florida with five in Miami and three in Jacksonville. Operation Jetway data indicate that in 2001 law enforcement officials in Florida seized over 45 kilograms of drugs, primarily cocaine, marijuana, and heroin that were being transported on commercial buses.

Various DTOs and criminal groups distribute illicit drugs in Florida. Colombian DTOs and criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine and South American heroin and are one of the most dominant wholesale distributors of MDMA in Florida. Mexican criminal groups dominate the wholesale distribution of Mexican black tar and brown

powdered heroin and methamphetamine in Florida. Mexican criminal groups along with Jamaican criminal groups also dominate the wholesale distribution of marijuana statewide. Russian, Israeli, and western European DTOs and criminal groups are dominant wholesale MDMA distributors in Florida. Local independent Caucasian dealers are the most prominent distributors of ODDs statewide. Various criminal groups sell retail quantities of illicit drugs in the state; no particular group dominates retail distribution.

Drug-related gang activity in Florida is widespread. There are hundreds of local gangs and nationally affiliated gangs—street gangs that align themselves with gangs from Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York—in the state. Some of the nationally affiliated gangs have thousands of members and associates, many of whom are violent career criminals. Law enforcement authorities report that Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, and Vice Lords operate local chapters in Florida and distribute drugs. Local neighborhood gangs—with little or no affiliation to national street gangs—also sell retail quantities of drugs in Florida. According to the South Florida High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA), there were 109 gangs with approximately 1,256 confirmed members in Miami-Dade County in 2001. Gang members often are heavily armed, and they frequently use weapons to commit drug-related crimes, including homicide, assault, and armed robbery. (See text box on page 5.)

Federal seizure statistics indicate that marijuana, cocaine, heroin and, to a much lesser extent, methamphetamine frequently are seized in Florida. According to Federal-wide Drug Seizure System (FDSS) data from 1997 through 2001, federal law enforcement officials in Florida seized a total of 134,502 kilograms of marijuana, 72,879 kilograms of cocaine, 2,071 kilograms of heroin, and 339 kilograms of methamphetamine. (See Table 1 on page 5.)

**Table 1. Federal Drug Seizures in Kilograms, Florida, 1997–2001**

	Cocaine	Heroin	Methamphetamine	Marijuana
<b>1997</b>	<b>24,375.6</b>	<b>478.0</b>	<b>9.5</b>	<b>33,439.4</b>
<b>1998</b>	<b>18,040.8</b>	<b>331.3</b>	<b>27.0</b>	<b>26,839.6</b>
<b>1999</b>	<b>12,447.5</b>	<b>232.8</b>	<b>157.5</b>	<b>24,690.9</b>
<b>2000</b>	<b>10,657.5</b>	<b>395.0</b>	<b>59.4</b>	<b>19,347.6</b>
<b>2001</b>	<b>7,357.2</b>	<b>633.8</b>	<b>85.2</b>	<b>30,184.2</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>72,878.6</b>	<b>2,070.9</b>	<b>338.6</b>	<b>134,501.7</b>

Source: FDSS.

### Gangs in Florida

#### **Bloods and Crips**

Bloods and Crips originated in Los Angeles and are two of the largest and most violent associations of criminal street gangs in the United States. The membership of both gangs is primarily African American. Both gangs are a collection of structured and unstructured gangs commonly known as sets. Gang sets are established by an individual who runs the set and recruits members to distribute drugs, primarily cocaine, marijuana, and PCP. Both Bloods and Crips distribute drugs throughout the country including Florida. Although Bloods and Crips sets are located throughout the United States, not all gangs that claim to be Bloods or Crips are affiliated with the Los Angeles-based Bloods or Crips. The gangs harbor deep hatred toward each other, and each considers the other a rival. The two gangs will, however, cooperate in criminal ventures for profit.

#### **Gangster Disciples**

Gangster Disciples is the largest of the Chicago-based street gangs, and its members are primarily African American. This gang has been in existence since the early 1960s. Its organizational hierarchy resembles that of a corporation. The gang distributes illicit drugs, primarily crack cocaine, heroin, and marijuana, in over 40 states including Florida.

#### **Latin Kings**

Latin Kings, also known as Almighty Latin King Nation, is a predominantly Hispanic street gang with two major factions: one in Chicago and one in New York City. This gang started as a street level political organization in Hispanic communities but later evolved into organized criminal enterprises that distribute drugs and commit violent crimes. Latin Kings is a highly structured gang that relies on strict, detailed charters to maintain discipline. The Chicago-based Latin Kings, affiliated with People Nation, is the foundation upon which all Latin Kings groups are based. The gang has expanded to 30 states including Florida.

#### **Vice Lords**

Vice Lords, one of the largest and most violent associations of street gangs in the United States, is based in Chicago. Its membership is predominantly African American. Vice Lords is split among major factions such as Conservative Vice Lords, Traveling Vice Lords, and Four Corner Hustlers. Each faction has a distinct membership and leadership. Vice Lords members distribute drugs, principally crack cocaine, marijuana, methamphetamine, as well as some heroin, in 28 states including Florida.

The percentage of drug-related federal sentences in Florida is higher than the percentage nationwide. According to U.S. Sentencing Commission (USSC) data, 48.9 percent of federal sentences in Florida in FY2001 were drug-related, compared with 41.2 percent nationally. Nearly 60 percent (59.2%) of the drug-related federal sentences in Florida involved powdered or crack cocaine, compared with 42.5 percent nationally. These data indicated some regional variations. For example, sentences for powdered cocaine and heroin are significantly higher in the Southern District of Florida than in the rest of the state.

Inmates in Florida state prisons are incarcerated more often for drug offenses than for any other single offense. According to the Florida Department of Corrections, as of June 30, 2001, a high percentage of inmates in Florida were incarcerated on drug-related charges (17.9%), followed by burglary (16.5%), murder/manslaughter (14.5%), robbery (13.9%), and violent personal offenses such as aggravated assault (12.0%). Many prisoners incarcerated on nondrug-related charges also abused drugs or committed offenses to support their drug habit.

**Table 2. Percentage of Adult Male Arrestees Testing Positive for Drug Abuse by Drug Type Fort Lauderdale and Miami, 2000**

	Fort Lauderdale	Miami
<b>Any Illicit Drug</b>	<b>61.8</b>	<b>62.8</b>
<b>Cocaine</b>	<b>30.9</b>	<b>43.5</b>
<b>Heroin</b>	<b>2.1</b>	<b>4.0</b>
<b>Methamphetamine</b>	<b>0.0</b>	<b>0.0</b>
<b>Marijuana</b>	<b>43.3</b>	<b>38.5</b>

Source: ADAM.

In 2000 illicit drugs frequently were detected among adult male arrestees in Miami and Fort Lauderdale, the two cities in Florida that participate in the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) Program. According to 2000 ADAM data, 62.8 percent of adult male arrestees in Miami and 61.8 percent in Fort Lauderdale tested positive for abusing at least one illicit substance.

**ADAM Program**

The ADAM program—administered by the National Institute of Justice—tracks trends in the prevalence and types of drug use among booked arrestees in selected urban areas of the United States. The ADAM Program involves two components—a questionnaire administered by a trained interviewer to an arrestee in a booking facility and a urine sample collected from the arrestee within 48 hours of arrest. In 2000 data were collected for 39 metropolitan areas across the United States. ADAM data for Fort Lauderdale were collected from randomly selected arrestees at a facility in Broward County, and Miami data were collected from randomly selected arrestees at a facility in Miami-Dade County.

Drug-related deaths frequently occur in Florida. According to the *2001 Report of Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons* by Florida Medical Examiners, there were approximately 169,000 deaths in Florida in 2001. Florida medical examiners performed autopsies or toxicology tests on 15,000 of these decedents, and 5,276 tested positive for drugs and/or alcohol. Of those, 1,304 individuals died as a direct result of drug and/or alcohol abuse, many from multiple drugs. According to Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) mortality data, drug-related deaths in Miami-Dade County increased from 1996 through 2000. Drugs were a factor in 148 deaths in Miami-Dade County in 1996 and 216 deaths in 2000, the most recent year for which DAWN data are available. Of the 216 deaths reported in Miami-Dade County in 2000, 112 were drug-induced (overdoses).

Florida has a significant number of drug-related treatment admissions. According to the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS), substance abuse-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities in Florida increased from 52,997 in 1997 to 67,734 in 2001. (See Table 3 on page 7.) The number of drug- and alcohol-related treatment admissions per 100,000 population in Florida (625) was higher than the number per 100,000 nationwide (607) in 1999, the most recent year for which these data are available.

**Table 3. Substance Abuse-Related Treatment Admissions to Publicly Funded Facilities, Florida, 1997–2001**

	Total*	Cocaine (Smoked)	Cocaine (Other Route)	Heroin	Methamphetamine	Marijuana
1997	52,997	10,588	3,090	1,669	379	12,146
1998	63,652	12,991	3,846	2,444	498	3,842
1999	84,524	15,374	4,446	4,041	552	17,057
2000	80,249	13,414	4,154	4,201	420	15,842
2001	67,734	10,164	3,211	3,723	467	14,356

Source: TEDS.

\*Includes admissions for alcohol abuse.

Survey data indicate that illicit drugs frequently are abused in Florida. According to the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA), Florida residents abuse drugs at a rate statistically comparable to the rate nationwide. In 1999 and 2000, 5.9 percent of those surveyed in Florida reported having abused an illicit drug at least once in the month prior to the survey, compared with 6.3 percent nationwide. The 2001 Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) report indicates that 40.2 percent of high school students in Florida reported having abused marijuana at least once in their lifetime and that 23.1 percent reported current use (use in the last 30 days) of the drug. The survey also indicates that 8.3 percent of the students reported lifetime cocaine use, 4.0 percent reported current cocaine use, 3.7 percent reported lifetime heroin use, and 7.6 reported lifetime methamphetamine use.

The financial impact on Florida’s government from substance abuse-related costs and services is significant. According to the National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University, in 1998, the most recent year for which these data are available, Florida spent over \$3.1 billion on substance abuse-related costs and services. This entailed spending across program areas including justice, education, health, child-family assistance, mental health-developmental disabilities, public safety, and the state workforce. This

figure amounted to almost 10 percent of the total expenditures for the state. When the cost of lost productivity and nongovernmental expenses by private social services are factored in, estimates for total substance abuse-related costs are even higher.

Money laundering poses a serious threat to Florida, particularly in the greater Miami area. Law enforcement authorities and money laundering experts report that Florida faces one of the highest money laundering threats in the country. The state’s transportation infrastructure, international banks, ethnic diversity, and proximity to drug source and transit countries as well as to offshore banking centers make Florida an ideal location for money laundering.

Colombian, various Caribbean, and Mexican DTOs and criminal groups, particularly in southern Florida, are the most dominant drug money launderers in the state. However, various other DTOs, criminal groups, and independent money launderers conduct money laundering operations in the state. Money launderers frequently structure bank deposits and transmit drug proceeds by wire in an attempt to conceal illegal drug activities. In southern Florida 7,244 Suspicious Activity Reports (SARs) were filed by financial institutions in FY2001, the third highest number of filings in the United States. From 1997 through 2001, 59 percent of the money laundering violations cited in SARs involved structuring of transactions to avoid



currency reporting requirements. Currency also is smuggled in bulk, often by couriers traveling aboard commercial airlines and by maritime conveyances. Operation Jetway data indicate that almost \$1.6 million dollars were seized at Florida airports in 2001. USCS officials in Florida seized \$6,041,286 in bulk currency from outbound shipments in FY2001. USCS officials also report that the Colombian Black Market Peso Exchange (BMPE), an unofficial currency exchange system, is one of the primary methods used to launder money in southern Florida.

**Black Market Peso Exchange System**  
 The BMPE is a money laundering system through which Colombian DTOs and criminal groups launder billions of dollars annually. Black market currency brokers, for a fee, match the needs of Colombian DTOs for local currency with the needs of merchants for American dollars. Colombian DTOs use pesos to pay expenses and finance drug operations. Merchants use dollars to purchase goods inside the United States and elsewhere. The goods often are falsely invoiced or smuggled into Colombia to avoid taxes and tariffs. Merchants often resort to the BMPE to obtain dollars because it is generally more efficient and less expensive than purchasing currency through the official banking system.

## **Cocaine**

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Cocaine, both powdered and crack, poses a serious threat to Florida. The drug is readily available, commonly abused, and its distribution and abuse are more often associated with violent crime than any other illicit drug in the state. Florida is the primary destination for cocaine smuggled from South America through the Caribbean and into the United States. South Florida and, to a lesser extent, Jacksonville and Tampa serve as regional transportation hubs and transshipment points for multikilogram to multihundred-kilogram quantities of cocaine generally destined for distribution in states east of the Mississippi River. Colombian DTOs and criminal groups control the transportation to the state; however, they usually rely on Bahamian, Cuban American, Dominican, Haitian, Jamaican, Puerto Rican and other Caribbean criminal groups to transport cocaine into Florida. Maritime vessels are the

primary conveyances used to transport cocaine to Florida. Colombian DTOs and criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine in Florida. The primary criminal groups and gangs that distribute wholesale quantities of crack cocaine in Florida vary by area and include Haitian and Jamaican criminal groups, African American and Hispanic gangs, and local independent Caucasian dealers. Various criminal groups, African American and Hispanic gangs, and Caucasian and African American local independent dealers are the dominant retail distributors of powdered and crack cocaine in Florida. Powdered cocaine often is packaged in plastic bags and distributed at open-air drug markets, private residences, some businesses and offices, parties, nightclubs, and raves or techno parties. Crack cocaine usually is sold as rocks and packaged in small plastic bags at open-air drug markets.

## **Abuse**

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Cocaine, particularly crack, is commonly abused in Florida. Treatment admissions for cocaine abuse exceeded admissions for any other illicit drug from 1997 through 2000; however, in

2001 marijuana-related admissions surpassed cocaine-related admissions. According to TEDS data, the number of cocaine-related treatment admissions in Florida increased from 13,678 in

1997 to 19,820 in 1999, then decreased to 17,568 in 2000, and decreased again to 13,375 in 2001. (See Table 3 on page 7.) Approximately 76 percent (10,164) of cocaine-related admissions in Florida in 2001 were for smoked cocaine (crack). The number of cocaine-related treatment admissions per 100,000 population (155) in Florida exceeded the number per 100,000 population nationwide (104) in 1999, the most recent year for which these data are available. According to combined data from the 1999 and the 2000 NHSDA, 1.7 percent of Florida residents surveyed reported having abused cocaine at least once during the year prior to the survey, comparable to 1.6 percent nationwide.

### **Publicly Funded Substance Abuse Treatment Facilities in Florida**

According to the Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Data Unit of the Florida Department of Children and Families, the dramatic decline in the number of drug-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities in Florida from 2000 through 2001 is attributable to three key factors:

- Prior to 2001 individuals seeking treatment were counted each time they were admitted to treatment; beginning in 2001 individuals who sought treatment were counted only once.
- In 2001 data collection regarding treatment admissions was computerized. Various treatment facilities were unable to comply; thus, their admissions data were not included in the state totals.
- Due to budgetary constraints funding for some treatment facilities was reduced in 2001.

Cocaine abuse frequently is cited in drug-related deaths in Florida. According to the *2001 Report of Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons* by Florida Medical Examiners, there were 1,105 cocaine-related deaths in the state in 2001. Of the 1,105 cocaine-related deaths, 390 were overdoses. The areas with the highest number of

cocaine-related deaths were Miami, West Palm Beach, Jacksonville, Fort Lauderdale, and Orlando. According to DAWN mortality data, cocaine-related deaths in Miami-Dade County increased from 1996 through 2000. Cocaine was a factor in 129 deaths in Miami-Dade County in 1996 and 151 deaths in 2000. There were more deaths related to cocaine than to any other illicit drug during that period.

Miami had more emergency department (ED) mentions associated with cocaine abuse than with abuse of any other illicit drug from 1997 through 2001. According to DAWN data, the number of cocaine-related ED mentions in Miami increased annually from 3,254 in 1997 to 4,641 in 2001. The rate of cocaine-related ED mentions per 100,000 population in Miami also increased from 174 in 1997 to 225 in 2001.

The percentage of high school students in Florida who reported having abused cocaine is statistically comparable to the percentage nationwide. According to 2001 YRBS data, 8.3 percent of Florida high school students surveyed reported having abused cocaine at least once in their lifetime, compared with 9.4 percent nationwide. Further, 4.0 percent of Florida high school students surveyed reported that they had abused cocaine in the 30 days prior to the survey, compared with 4.2 percent nationally. There reportedly are indications of a resurgence in the popularity of powdered cocaine abuse among teenagers and young adults, particularly those who attend rave parties and nightclubs. Currently there is a growing stigma associated with crack use, especially in metropolitan areas. This may contribute to a slight decline in the rate of crack cocaine abuse among young people.

Cocaine frequently was detected among adult male arrestees in Miami and Fort Lauderdale in 2000. According to ADAM data, 43.5 percent of adult male arrestees in Miami and 30.9 percent in Fort Lauderdale tested positive for cocaine abuse in 2000. (See Table 2 on page 6.)

## Availability

Cocaine, both powdered and crack, is readily available in Florida. From 1997 through 2001 cocaine was seized more frequently than any other illicit drug except marijuana. However, according to FDSS data, the amount of cocaine seized by federal law enforcement officials in Florida decreased from 24,376 kilograms in 1997 to 7,357 kilograms in 2001. (See Table 1 on page 5.) According to various law enforcement officials in Florida, powdered cocaine is increasingly available at nightclubs in metropolitan areas such as Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando, Tallahassee, and Tampa. Crack cocaine is readily available throughout the state, particularly in economically distressed communities in urban areas.

### Cocaine-Laced Marijuana Cigarettes

Law enforcement officials and drug treatment counselors in Miami, Florida, report that individuals continue to smoke marijuana cigarettes laced with powdered cocaine, something that has been done in Miami since the early 1980s and appears to be gaining popularity. According to drug treatment counselors, users report that cocaine ameliorates the depressant effects of marijuana while marijuana ameliorates the feelings of nervousness associated with cocaine use. Users typically cover marijuana with powdered cocaine before rolling it into cigarettes, often referred to as dirties. Cocaine-laced marijuana has become so popular in the Miami metropolitan area that some retail distributors sell prepackaged marijuana and powdered cocaine for \$15 per package—\$10 worth of cocaine and \$5 worth of marijuana. The prepackaged marijuana and cocaine is often referred to as DP and a Pooch or Macaroni & Cheese.

The price of powdered and crack cocaine in Florida varies, depending on a number of factors including the buyer's familiarity with the seller, the area of distribution, and the quantity sold. Cocaine prices are generally higher in the northern part of the state. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) Miami Division, kilogram quantities of powdered cocaine sold for \$16,000 to \$24,000 in southern Florida, \$18,000 to \$28,600 in central Florida, and \$23,000 to \$30,000 in northern Florida in the second quarter of FY2002. During that period crack cocaine sold for \$20,000 to \$30,000 per kilogram statewide, when available in that quantity. DEA further reported that in the second quarter of FY2002, powdered cocaine sold for \$600 to \$1,400 per ounce and \$20 to \$110 per gram statewide. Crack sold for \$5 to \$20 per rock (one-fifth to one-quarter gram), depending upon where the cocaine was sold.

The percentage of cocaine-related federal sentences in Florida was significantly higher than for any other drug each year from FY1997 through FY2001 and was higher than the percentage nationwide every year during that period. According to USSC data, 59.2 percent of drug-related federal sentences in Florida in FY2001 were powdered cocaine- or crack cocaine-related, compared with 42.5 percent nationally. Further, 41.5 percent of the drug-related federal sentences in Florida in FY2001 were powdered cocaine-related, compared with 22.1 percent nationwide. In FY2001 powdered cocaine-related federal sentences accounted for a higher percentage of all federal drug-related sentences in the Southern District of Florida (51.5%) than in the Middle District of Florida (28.2%) or the Northern District of Florida (17.8%).

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## Violence

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Crack cocaine is the drug most frequently associated with violent crime in Florida, particularly in inner-city neighborhoods and low-income housing projects. Retail crack distributors, particularly African American and Hispanic gang members, in these locations often commit assault and homicide to protect their turf. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials report that criminal groups and gangs that distribute crack often commit drive-by shooting, home invasion, and assault. In addition, crack cocaine abusers frequently commit violent crimes to support their drug habit.

### Home Invasion Robbery Results in Death

In August 2002 local law enforcement officials in Arlington (east of Jacksonville) arrested four men for attempting to steal crack in a home invasion robbery that resulted in the death of one of the intruders.

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Source: Duval County Sheriff's Office.

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## Production

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Coca is not cultivated nor is cocaine produced in Florida. Virtually all of the cocaine consumed in the world is produced in South America. Colombian DTOs produce most of the cocaine smuggled into Florida.

Most of the crack sold in Florida is converted from powdered cocaine in the state. Distributors are aware that federal sentences for distribution or possession of crack are lengthier than for powdered cocaine. Consequently, distributors typically convert powdered cocaine into crack locally and often distribute the drug near the conversion site.

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## Transportation

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Florida is the primary destination for cocaine smuggled from South America through the Caribbean and into the United States. Miami and, to a lesser extent, Jacksonville and Tampa serve as regional transportation hubs and transshipment points for multikilogram to multihundred-kilogram quantities of cocaine generally destined for distribution in states east of the Mississippi River. Colombian DTOs and criminal groups control the transportation into the state; however, they usually rely on Bahamian, Cuban American, Dominican, Haitian, Jamaican, Puerto Rican, and other Caribbean-based criminal groups to transport cocaine into Florida. Maritime vessels are the primary conveyances used to transport cocaine into

Florida, although commercial and private aircraft and vehicles, buses, trains, and package delivery services also are used.

Most of the cocaine transported into Florida is smuggled aboard maritime vessels. Some vessels depart from source or transit countries in South and Central America and the Caribbean en route to Florida. Other vessels rendezvous with maritime vessels acting as motherships or retrieve cocaine from airdrops. Large shipments of cocaine typically are smuggled into the state aboard containerized cargo vessels, coastal freighters, and go-fast boats. Cocaine smuggled aboard containerized cargo vessels typically is intermingled with goods inside a container or

concealed within the walls of the container, while cocaine smuggled aboard coastal freighters usually is secreted inside fuel or water tanks, voids in the vessels' structures, or within hidden compartments. Cocaine smuggled in go-fast boats usually is covered with a tarp. Smaller quantities of cocaine frequently are smuggled aboard cruise ships and pleasure craft. Drug couriers aboard cruise ships typically conceal cocaine on their person or in their luggage. These couriers also store cocaine on the ship for retrieval after the vessel has docked or pass cocaine to corrupt crew members. Cocaine also is airdropped to maritime vessels waiting in the Caribbean, the Florida Straits, or near the Bahamas. Once airdropped, packages of cocaine, usually attached to fishing buoys by a cable, are transported to Florida in go-fast boats, fishing vessels, or other maritime means. USCS officials in Florida seized over 14,375 kilograms of cocaine from maritime vessels in 2001.

Commercial and private aircraft and package delivery services also are used to transport cocaine into Florida. Cocaine shipments smuggled into Florida on aircraft are concealed using various means. Couriers often conceal cocaine internally, tape the drug to their bodies, or hide it in clothing. Cocaine also is hidden in luggage among clothing or inside false compartments. Cocaine in air cargo shipments typically is packaged inside a container or box or intermingled with legitimate products. USCS officials in Florida seized over 1,435 kilograms of cocaine from commercial and private aircraft and over 19 kilograms in packages in 2001. On March 27, 2002, DEA seized 20 kilograms of cocaine in an air cargo shipment at the package facility in Miami. On January 28 and 29, 2002, USCS agents at Fort Lauderdale/Hollywood International Airport arrested two drug couriers arriving from Haiti and seized approximately 16.5 kilograms of cocaine that was hidden in false panels of suitcases.

Commercial and private vehicles are the primary overland conveyances used to transport cocaine to Florida, principally to the northern and central parts of the state, although buses and trains also are used. Some Mexican criminal

### **Multiton Quantities of Cocaine Transported to the Port of Miami**

On September 11, 2002, the U.S. Attorney for the Southern District of Florida reported the convictions of four individuals on conspiracy charges for their role in transporting and distributing approximately 20,000 kilograms of cocaine from 1992 through 1997. The case was a result of a joint investigation conducted by USCS, DEA, and the Internal Revenue Service (IRS). The cocaine was smuggled into the country through the Port of Miami. It usually was concealed in large shipping containers, often intermingled with the legitimate cargo of unknowing consignees. Three of the convicted individuals were Port of Miami employees who facilitated the movement of the containers to an area of the port where the cocaine could be removed without being observed by USCS officials. The fourth was a dockworker from the Port of New Jersey who traveled to Miami and helped to remove the cocaine from the containers. After being removed from the shipping containers, the cocaine was transported in private vehicles to stash houses for subsequent transport to locations throughout the United States.

Source: U.S. Attorney's Office Southern District of Florida.

groups transport cocaine across the U.S.–Mexico border to Florida via tractor-trailers and private vehicles. On August 26, 2002, federal, state, and local law enforcement officers arrested 12 members of a Jacksonville-based DTO and seized approximately 300 pounds of cocaine, more than 1 ton of marijuana, and \$1.1 million. Law enforcement officials report that the DTO transported cocaine and marijuana in commercial trucks and private vehicles from Mexico to Jacksonville for distribution to midlevel wholesale dealers in Florida, the Carolinas, and New York. The DTO—composed primarily of Mexican nationals—had distributed drugs from the Jacksonville area for approximately 3 years. Cocaine also is transported using similar conveyances from Florida to other states such as Georgia, New Jersey, and New York. In 2001 law enforcement officials seized 190

kilograms of cocaine from commercial and private vehicles in Florida as part of Operation Pipeline. They also seized 46 kilograms of cocaine on buses

and 28 kilograms of cocaine on trains as part of Operation Jetway that year.

## Distribution

Florida is one of the most significant cocaine distribution areas in the United States. DTOs and criminal groups based in Miami supply cocaine to distributors throughout Florida in addition to those that generally operate east of the Mississippi River. According to the New York/New Jersey HIDTA, Miami is a supply area for cocaine distributed in New York and New Jersey. Further,

state and local law enforcement officials in at least eight other states—Georgia, Louisiana, North Carolina, Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Tennessee, and Virginia—responding to the NDIC National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) 2002 report that Miami is a supply area for cocaine available in their jurisdictions.

### NDIC National Drug Threat Survey 2002

The NDTS 2002 was administered by NDIC to a representative sample of state and local law enforcement agencies throughout the United States to assess the availability, abuse, and overall threat posed by all major drugs. NDIC received 2,906 survey responses from law enforcement agencies, a response rate of 80 percent. Survey respondents were asked to rank the greatest drug threats in their areas and to indicate the level of availability for each major drug type. They also were asked to provide information on specific groups involved in the transportation and distribution of illicit drugs. Responding agencies also provided narrative assessments of various aspects of the overall drug situation and the threat of specific drugs in their areas. Survey responses are used by NDIC to substantiate and augment drug threat information obtained from other federal, state, and local law enforcement agencies.

Colombian DTOs and criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of powdered cocaine in Florida. These DTOs and criminal groups often sell multikilogram quantities of powdered cocaine to African American, Mexican, Dominican, Haitian, Jamaican and other Caribbean criminal groups who also distribute wholesale and midlevel quantities of powdered cocaine in the state, sometimes on behalf of Colombian DTOs. According to federal and state law enforcement officials, Mexican criminal groups increasingly are using their well-established distribution networks to distribute wholesale and retail quantities of cocaine and other drugs in Florida. Many criminal groups temporarily store and distribute cocaine from stash houses. Multi-ounce to multikilogram quantities of cocaine are then sold to various DTOs and criminal groups for further distribution in Florida and in other states.

The primary criminal groups and gangs that distribute wholesale quantities of crack cocaine in Florida vary by area. In southern Florida where wholesale crack distribution is most common, Haitian and Jamaican criminal groups and African American and Hispanic gangs such as Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, and Vice Lords are the dominant wholesale distributors of crack. In northern and central Florida, African American and Hispanic gangs and local independent Caucasian dealers are the primary wholesale distributors. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials report that wholesale crack distributors sometimes sell “cookies,” crack that has been formed into patties measuring approximately 3 inches in diameter and weighing approximately 1 ounce.

**Florida Drug Threat Assessment**

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Various criminal groups, gangs, and local independent dealers sell retail quantities of powdered and crack cocaine in Florida. African American, Haitian, Jamaican, Mexican, and Caucasian criminal groups; gangs such as Bloods, Crips, Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, and Vice Lords; and local independent Caucasian and African American dealers are the dominant retail distributors of powdered and crack cocaine in Florida. Powdered cocaine, usually cut with diluents such as cornstarch, flour, talc, and vitamin B<sub>12</sub>, is most frequently packaged in plastic bags. The drug usually is distributed at open-air drug markets, private residences, some businesses and offices, parties, nightclubs, and raves or techno

parties. Crack usually is sold as rocks and packaged in small plastic bags at open-air drug markets.

**Crack Distribution in Tampa**

On January 31, 2002, DEA agents in Tampa arrested seven members of a Jamaican posse that distributed cocaine, primarily crack, on Tampa's east side for at least 3 years. This posse purchased 2 kilograms of powdered cocaine biweekly in Fort Lauderdale and transported the drug to Tampa in private vehicles. DEA seized 700 grams of crack, \$8,000, and five handguns during this investigation.

Source: DEA.

**Heroin**

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Heroin poses a threat to Florida. The drug is readily available, frequently abused, and the distribution of heroin is occasionally associated with violent crimes such as assault, drive-by shooting, and homicide. South American heroin is most prevalent; however, Mexican black tar heroin and brown powdered heroin also are available, although to a limited degree. Southeast and Southwest Asian heroin are rarely available in Florida. Miami and, to a lesser extent, Orlando are among the primary transportation hubs and transshipment points for South American heroin smuggled into the United States. Colombian DTOs and criminal groups control the transportation of South American heroin into Florida using Colombian, Dominican, Jamaican, Puerto Rican and, to a lesser extent, Mexican criminal groups. South American heroin generally is transported into Florida by air, although maritime and overland conveyances also are used. Mexican criminal groups are the dominant transporters of Mexican black tar and Mexican brown powdered heroin into Florida. These groups generally transport the

drug into the state in private vehicles and via package delivery services. Colombian criminal groups control the wholesale distribution of South American heroin in Florida; Puerto Rican and Dominican criminal groups, African American and Hispanic gangs, and various local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors. Wholesale quantities of Mexican black tar or brown powdered heroin rarely are available in Florida. Mexican and Puerto Rican criminal groups, Hispanic and African American gangs, and local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of Mexican black tar and brown powdered heroin in Florida. Retail quantities of heroin usually are packaged in bindles (approximately one-tenth gram folded in tinfoil) and sold at open-air drug markets, from parked vehicles and residences, and in nightclubs, bars, and other clubs. Retail distributors also sell heroin to known associates and often arrange meetings with customers using pagers.

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## Abuse

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Heroin is abused increasingly in Florida. According to TEDS data, the number of heroin-related treatment admissions in Florida increased from 1,669 in 1997 to 3,723 in 2001, peaking at 4,201 in 2000. (See Table 3 on page 7.) However, the number of heroin-related treatment admissions per 100,000 population (32) in Florida was dramatically lower than the number per 100,000 population nationwide (105) in 1999, the most recent year for which these data are available.

Heroin abuse often is cited in drug-related deaths in Florida. According to the *2001 Report of Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons* by Florida Medical Examiners, there were 328 heroin-related deaths in the state in 2001. Of the 328 heroin-related deaths, 271 were overdoses. Most of the heroin-related deaths occurred in the West Palm Beach, Fort Lauderdale, Orlando, and Miami areas. According to DAWN mortality data, heroin-related deaths in Miami-Dade County increased dramatically from 1996 through 2000. Heroin was a factor in 29 deaths in Miami-Dade County in 1996 and in 86 deaths in 2000.

Miami has a significant number of ED mentions associated with heroin abuse. The number of heroin-related ED mentions in Miami increased steadily from 591 in 1997 to 1,666 in 2001, a 182 percent increase. The rate of heroin-related ED mentions per 100,000 population in Miami also increased from 32 in 1997 to 81 in 2001.

The percentage of Florida high school students reporting having abused heroin at least once in their lifetime is statistically comparable to the

national percentage. According to 2001 YRBS data, 3.7 percent of Florida high school students surveyed reported having abused heroin at least once in their lifetime, compared to 3.1 percent nationwide.

Heroin was occasionally detected among adult male arrestees in Miami and Fort Lauderdale in 2000. According to ADAM data, 4.0 percent of adult male arrestees in Miami and 2.1 percent of adult male arrestees in Fort Lauderdale tested positive for heroin abuse in 2000. (See Table 2 on page 6.)

In Florida heroin is administered via a variety of methods depending upon users' preferences. Heroin injectors are mostly hardcore addicts who often share needles. According to DEA and local law enforcement officials throughout the state, novices and recreational abusers prefer snorting or, to a lesser extent, smoking heroin in part because of a reduced risk of contracting needle-borne diseases such as AIDS (acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) and hepatitis. Many of these abusers mistakenly believe that snorting or smoking will not lead to addiction.

Various treatment providers report that a relatively new trend in Florida involves some abusers of prescription opiates, particularly OxyContin, switching to high purity heroin that can be effectively snorted or smoked. OxyContin and other prescription opiates are becoming more expensive and difficult to obtain in Florida because doctors are increasingly reluctant to prescribe them.

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## Availability

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Heroin is readily available in Florida, primarily in major metropolitan areas. According to federal, state, and local law enforcement officials, heroin is readily available in and around cities such as Miami, Orlando, Tampa, and Jacksonville. South

American heroin is most prevalent; however, Mexican black tar heroin and brown powdered heroin also are available, although to a lesser extent. Southeast and Southwest Asian heroin are rarely available in Florida. According to



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FDSS data, the amount of heroin seized by federal law enforcement officials in Florida fluctuated but increased overall from 478 kilograms in 1997 to 634 kilograms in 2001. (See Table 1 on page 5.)

The price of heroin in Florida varies, depending on a number of factors including the buyer's familiarity with the seller, the location of sale, and the quantity sold. According to the DEA Miami Division, in the second quarter of FY2002, 1 kilogram of heroin sold for \$60,000 to \$100,000 in southern Florida and for \$60,000 to \$75,000 in central Florida. DEA also reported that ounce quantities of heroin sold for \$2,600 to \$4,000 in southern Florida and \$2,200 to \$3,000 in central Florida. Kilogram and ounce prices were not reported for northern Florida in the second quarter of FY2002. According to DEA, gram quantities of heroin sold for \$60 to \$120 in southern Florida, \$60 to \$100 in central Florida, and \$140 to \$220 in northern Florida during that period.

Heroin purity levels in Florida are high. According to the Central Florida HIDTA Heroin Task Force, which monitors heroin data statewide, wholesale or kilogram quantities of heroin

in Florida were approximately 80 to 90 percent pure in the second quarter of FY2002, while midlevel or ounce quantities were approximately 40 to 60 percent pure. DEA also reported that retail quantities of heroin (grams or less) were 20 to 40 percent pure. Bulk quantities of heroin frequently are cut with diluents such as lactose, cellulose, and mannitol or adulterants such as procaine, caffeine, and quinine.

The percentage of heroin-related federal sentences in Florida was higher than the percentage nationwide each year from FY1997 through FY2001. According to USSC data, 15.0 percent of drug-related federal sentences in Florida in FY2001 were heroin-related, compared with 7.2 percent nationwide. In FY2001 heroin-related sentences accounted for a higher percentage of total federal drug-related sentences in the Southern District of Florida than in the two other districts in the state. In that year the percentage of heroin-related federal sentences was 21.1 percent in Southern Florida and 7.0 percent in Middle Florida. There were no heroin-related federal sentences in Northern Florida.

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**Violence**

Heroin abuse normally is not associated with violent behavior, although the overwhelming need to support their drug habits drives many heroin abusers to engage in prostitution, drug distribution, theft, burglary, and robbery. Abusers often steal from family members to obtain the funds necessary to purchase heroin.

Heroin distributors in Florida sometimes commit violent crimes such as assault, drive-by shooting, and homicide. According to local law enforcement officials in Jacksonville, heroin and cocaine distributors compete to sell their drugs at the same street corners, resulting in an increase in the level of violence in areas where that activity occurs.

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**Production**

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

available in Florida is produced in South America and, to a lesser extent, Mexico.

## Transportation

Miami and Orlando are among the primary transportation hubs and transshipment points for South American heroin smuggled into the United States. A significant portion of the South American heroin smuggled into Florida is transshipped to other states, principally in the northeastern and, to a lesser extent, southeastern United States. Colombian DTOs and criminal groups control the transportation of South American heroin into Florida using Colombian, Dominican, and Puerto Rican criminal groups and, to a lesser extent, Mexican criminal groups. South American heroin generally is transported into Florida by air, although maritime and overland conveyances also are used. Mexican criminal groups are the dominant transporters of Mexican black tar and brown powdered heroin to Florida. Mexican criminal groups generally transport Mexican heroin into the state in private vehicles and via package delivery services.

Couriers on commercial and private aircraft are the primary means by which South American heroin is smuggled into Florida; however, various other means also are used. Couriers smuggling South American heroin frequently arrive on direct flights from Colombia or take indirect flights to Miami or Orlando by transiting countries such as Venezuela, Ecuador, Panama, Jamaica, and Costa Rica. Couriers often conceal heroin internally, tape the drug to their bodies, or hide it in clothing. When concealing the drug internally, couriers swallow latex fingers of gloves or condoms, known as pellets, which contain approximately 10 grams of heroin each. Couriers sometimes swallow as many as 100 pellets—a kilogram of heroin. On May 27, 2001, USCS arrested a male courier arriving at Miami International Airport who had ingested 1.14 kilograms of heroin in this manner. Heroin also is hidden in luggage with clothing or inside false compartments. Heroin in air cargo shipments typically is packaged inside a container or box or intermingled with legitimate products. USCS officials in Florida seized over

501 kilograms of heroin from commercial and private aircraft in 2001. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials seized 16 kilograms of heroin on commercial and private aircraft as part of Operation Jetway that same year.

### Heroin Seizures in Orlando

On February 5, 2002, USCS agents at Orlando International Airport arrested a Colombian man arriving from Colombia via Panama and seized approximately 18 pounds of heroin that had been “laundered” into his clothing. The heroin gave the clothing the appearance of being heavily starched and emitted a vinegar-like odor. Heroin starching, in which heroin is absorbed into fabric, is an old smuggling technique that has recently resurfaced in Miami and New York City. USCS agents also arrested the three individuals who were waiting to receive the heroin-soaked clothing.

Source: USCS.

In July 2000 DEA agents at the Orlando Executive Airport arrested two Venezuelan citizens arriving on a private jet from Venezuela and seized 13 kilograms of 90 percent pure South American heroin. The heroin was concealed in the soles of tennis shoes carried in the smugglers' luggage. According to the suspects, 5 kilograms were to be offloaded in Orlando, and 8 kilograms were destined for distribution in New York.

Source: DEA.

South American heroin also is smuggled to Florida aboard maritime vessels. Couriers—either crew members or passengers—aboard cruise ships occasionally conceal heroin on their bodies or in their luggage. USCS officials in Florida seized almost 25 kilograms of heroin from maritime vessels in 2001. Most of the heroin was seized in November 2001 by USCS officials at Port Everglades (Fort Lauderdale). In that incident

USCS officials arrested four couriers who were traveling on a cruise ship with a total of 47 pounds (21.4 kg) of heroin strapped to their bodies and concealed in the soles of their shoes. The ship had port calls in Colombia, Panama, the Cayman Islands, and Mexico. Federal law enforcement officials report that heroin sometimes is transported to Florida on fishing vessels or in containerized cargo vessels, occasionally intermingled with cocaine shipments.

Mexican and Dominican criminal groups sometimes transport heroin into Florida using overland conveyances. Mexican criminal groups sometimes transport South American heroin from

southwestern states to Florida in private vehicles. According to DEA, Dominican criminal groups occasionally transport South American heroin from New York City to Florida, primarily Orlando, in private vehicles. Law enforcement officials seized 1 kilogram of heroin from commercial and private vehicles as part of Operation Pipeline in 2001.

Mexican criminal groups are the primary transporters of Mexican black tar and brown powdered heroin into Florida. They usually smuggle Mexican heroin from Mexico into Florida using package delivery services and private vehicles.

## Distribution

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Miami and to a lesser extent Orlando are primary distribution centers for South American heroin destined for Florida and other states east of the Mississippi River. According to DEA, Miami is a supply area for South American heroin in New York City, also a primary heroin distribution center. State and local law enforcement officials in at least four other states—Alabama, Georgia, Kentucky, and Ohio—responding to the NDTs 2002 report that Miami is a supply area for heroin available in their jurisdictions.

Colombian criminal groups control the wholesale distribution of South American heroin in Florida. These criminal groups store multi-kilogram quantities of South American heroin in stash houses, primarily in southern Florida, and supply other criminal groups and gangs in and outside the state. Puerto Rican and Dominican criminal groups and, to a lesser extent, gangs such as Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, and Vice Lords also distribute wholesale quantities of South American heroin in Florida. Wholesale quantities of Mexican black tar or brown powdered heroin rarely are available in Florida.

Various criminal groups, gangs, and local independent dealers sell retail quantities of heroin in Florida. Puerto Rican and Dominican criminal groups; gangs such as Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, and Vice Lords; and various local independent dealers are the primary retail distributors of South American heroin in Florida. Mexican and Puerto Rican criminal groups, Hispanic and African American gangs, and local independent dealers distribute retail quantities of Mexican black tar and brown powdered heroin in Florida.

Retail quantities of heroin usually are packaged in bindles (approximately one-tenth gram folded in tinfoil) and sold at open-air drug markets, from parked vehicles and residences, and in nightclubs, bars, and other clubs. Retail distributors also sell heroin to known associates and often arrange meetings with customers using pagers. Heroin also is packaged for retail distribution in glassine bags known as 40s, 50s, or 60s—denoting the cost in dollars of the heroin. These bags generally average about one-quarter gram of heroin.

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## Methamphetamine

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Methamphetamine poses a serious and increasing threat to Florida and is a major public health problem in some areas of the state. The drug is frequently available and abused in rural areas and is increasingly available and abused in suburban and metropolitan areas. Methamphetamine production, distribution, and abuse often are associated with violent crime. In central Florida, an area that historically has had a significant methamphetamine problem, the availability and abuse of the drug have spread outward from Polk County. Most of the methamphetamine available in this area is produced in high volume laboratories in California, Mexico, and southwestern states using the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method. Significant quantities of methamphetamine available in Polk and surrounding counties are produced locally, primarily using the Birch reduction method. In northern Florida the number of methamphetamine laboratories has increased as users have learned how to produce the drug. Locally produced methamphetamine is increasingly available and abused in this area, although an increasing amount of methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states also is available in the state. In southern Florida crystal

methamphetamine is frequently seen in clubs and used in combination with other drugs, including MDMA. Mexican DTOs and criminal groups, the dominant transporters of methamphetamine, usually smuggle the drug in commercial and private vehicles into Florida from California, Mexico, and southwestern states. Methamphetamine also is transported into the state via couriers on commercial aircraft and via package delivery services from California, Mexico, and southwestern states. Mexican DTOs and criminal groups dominate the wholesale distribution of methamphetamine statewide. They typically sell pound quantities of methamphetamine to Caucasian and Mexican criminal groups who then sell ounce quantities to local independent Caucasian and Mexican dealers, the dominant retail distributors in the state. Street gangs such as Latin Kings, Vice Lords, and Sureños 13 also distribute retail quantities of methamphetamine in Florida. Retail quantities (1 gram to one-quarter gram) of methamphetamine usually are packaged in small plastic bags and sold on street corners and at open-air drug markets, private residences, bars, housing projects, mobile home parks, and occasionally at raves or techno parties.

## Abuse

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Much of the following data regarding methamphetamine abuse indicators in Florida is heavily focused on Miami or southern Florida. Methamphetamine is a predominantly rural phenomenon, heavily concentrated in central and northern Florida; therefore, data such as emergency department mentions and arrestee drug abuse indicators collected in southern Florida may not accurately reflect the true level of methamphetamine abuse throughout the state.

Methamphetamine is frequently abused in rural areas in Florida, and is increasingly abused in suburban and metropolitan areas. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials and treatment providers in Florida report that in central Florida,

an area that historically has had a significant methamphetamine problem, the availability and abuse of the drug have spread outward from Polk County. In some rural areas methamphetamine is being marketed as an alternative to crack. These officials and treatment providers also report that the level of abuse in northern Florida, the Florida panhandle, and in some areas of southern Florida such as Miami Beach, Key West, and Fort Lauderdale has increased.

Methamphetamine can be snorted, smoked, or injected and often is used in conjunction with other drugs, particularly pharmaceuticals. Drug treatment providers report that most methamphetamine abusers in Florida snort the drug, at least

### Crystal Methamphetamine

Crystal methamphetamine—also known as ice, crystal, glass, Tina, shabu, batu, hiropon, vidrio, ventana, and shards—is a colorless, odorless, higher purity form of d-methamphetamine. It is produced using a “washing” technique that involves dissolving powdered d-methamphetamine in a solvent such as acetone or denatured alcohol. The process results in crystals that resemble glass fragments or shiny blue-white “rocks” of various sizes. The purity of crystal methamphetamine typically is over 80 percent, depending upon the amount of washing, the purity of the initial substance, and the experience of the laboratory operator. Crystal methamphetamine typically is administered by smoking using a glass pipe, although some abusers inject the drug.

Crystal methamphetamine abuse is uncommon among the general population in Florida; however, its abuse is increasing in the Miami metropolitan area. Organizations working for the prevention and control of HIV in the Miami metropolitan area express great concern over the risks of methamphetamine abuse, primarily crystal methamphetamine, among some men who have sex with men and some heterosexuals involved in the techno dance scene. These organizations view high-risk sexual behavior associated with crystal methamphetamine abuse as the one factor that is having the most influence on the spread of HIV and AIDS in the Miami metropolitan area.

initially. However, the harsh chemicals used to produce methamphetamine damage the nasal passages, forcing abusers to resort to smoking or injecting the drug. According to federal, state, and local law enforcement officials, many methamphetamine abusers simultaneously use pharmaceuticals including benzodiazepines (Xanax and Valium), oxycodones (OxyContin and Percocet), and hydrocodones (Lorcet and Lortab), many of which are obtained illegally. State and local law enforcement officials in Florida report that most individuals arrested for possession of methamphetamine also possess other drugs,

including illegally obtained pharmaceuticals, at the time of their arrest.

Treatment data indicate that there are fewer methamphetamine-related admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities in Florida than for cocaine, heroin, or marijuana. According to TEDS data, the number of methamphetamine-related treatment admissions increased from 379 in 1997 to 467 in 2001. (See Table 3 on page 7.) The number of methamphetamine-related treatment admissions per 100,000 population (4) in Florida was dramatically lower than the number per 100,000 population nationwide (32) in 1999, the most recent year for which these data are available.

Methamphetamine abuse occasionally is cited in connection with drug-related deaths in Florida. According to the *2001 Report of Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons* by Florida Medical Examiners, there were 43 methamphetamine-related deaths in the state in 2001. According to DAWN mortality data, the number of methamphetamine-related deaths in Miami-Dade County increased from zero in 1996 to three in 2000.

Methamphetamine abuse is less frequently associated with ED mentions in Miami than is abuse of any other drug. According to DAWN data, the number of methamphetamine-related ED mentions in Miami increased from 10 in 1997 to 27 in 2001. In both 1997 and 2001, only one methamphetamine-related ED mention per 100,000 population was reported in Miami.

The percentage of high school students in Florida reporting having abused methamphetamine at least once in their lifetime is statistically comparable to the national percentage. According to 2001 YRBS data, 7.6 percent of Florida high school students surveyed reported having abused methamphetamine at least once in their lifetime, compared to 9.8 percent nationwide.

Methamphetamine is rarely abused by adult male arrestees in Miami and Fort Lauderdale. According to ADAM data, no adult male arrestees tested positive for methamphetamine abuse in either Miami or Fort Lauderdale in 2000. (See Table 2 on page 6.)

### Hepatitis A and Methamphetamine Abuse

The director of the Polk County Health Department reported a significant increase in the number of hepatitis A cases in that county. As of December 31, 2002, 227 residents had been diagnosed with hepatitis A, compared with 15 cases in 2000 and 164 in 2001. Health Department officials attribute the spread of hepatitis A to methamphetamine abusers with poor hygiene. Methamphetamine abusers reportedly have infected other members of their households through poor food handling practices. Hepatitis A is the most common type of hepatitis reported in the United States and is 100 percent preventable. Hepatitis A infects up to 200,000 Americans each year and is a highly contagious virus that attacks the liver. It is spread by the fecal-oral route through close person-to-person contact or by ingesting contaminated food or water. Symptoms, some of which can be debilitating, include fever, fatigue, loss of appetite, nausea, abdominal discomfort, jaundice, and dark urine. Infected individuals can unknowingly infect others 2 weeks prior to feeling ill themselves. An estimated 22 percent of adult hepatitis A patients require hospitalization, and approximately 100 individuals in the United States die every year from the disease.

Source: Polk County Health Department.

## Availability

Methamphetamine is often available in rural areas and more recently has become available in metropolitan and suburban areas. In central Florida, particularly Polk County, the availability of locally produced methamphetamine and methamphetamine produced in California, Mexico, and southwestern states has spread outward. In addition to local producers, laboratory operators from Alabama and Georgia, who produce methamphetamine primarily using the Birch reduction method, have begun producing methamphetamine in northern Florida. An increasing amount of methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states also is available. (See Methamphetamine Production Methods text box on page 24.) In southern Florida methamphetamine is infrequently available but availability is increasing. According to FDSS data, the amount of methamphetamine seized by federal law enforcement officials in Florida fluctuated but increased dramatically overall from nearly 10 kilograms in 1997 to 85 kilograms in 2001. (See Table 1 on page 5.) State and local law enforcement officials in at least five states—Alabama, Georgia, Iowa, South Carolina, and West Virginia—responding to the NDTs

2002 reported that Florida is a supply area for methamphetamine available in their jurisdictions.

Prices for methamphetamine vary throughout the state but are typically higher the farther an area is from Polk County, the primary distribution center. According to the DEA Miami Division, wholesale quantities of methamphetamine sold for \$8,000 to \$12,000 per pound in central and northern Florida in the second quarter of FY2002. Pound quantities are rarely available in southern Florida. Ounce quantities of methamphetamine sold for \$650 to \$1,200 in central Florida, \$800 to \$1,500 in northern Florida, and approximately \$1,500 in southern Florida during that period. DEA reported that methamphetamine typically sold for \$70 to \$100 per gram and \$250 per one-eighth ounce (8-ball) statewide during that period.

Purity levels for methamphetamine vary depending on the level of distribution and the production method used. According to DEA, in Florida kilogram quantities of methamphetamine produced in Mexico, California, and southwestern states are usually 80 percent pure before being cut with diluents such as MSM. Pound quantities of methamphetamine produced in these areas are typically 20 to 30 percent pure, cut with two parts

MSM per one part methamphetamine. Retail quantities (1 gram to one-quarter gram) of methamphetamine produced in these areas are often 8 to 16 percent pure statewide. Methamphetamine produced locally using the Birch reduction method generally has a higher purity level than methamphetamine produced in California, Mexico, and southwestern states. Local producers

often sell the drug to friends or relatives without cutting the drug. Locally produced methamphetamine, generally sold at the retail level, is 50 to 80 percent pure; however, according to the DEA Southeast Regional Laboratory, experienced producers in Florida often produce methamphetamine that is 90 to 95 percent pure.

**MSM Used as a Cutting Agent**

MSM, the common commercial name for the chemical methylsulfonylmethane, also is known as methylsulfone and dimethylsulfone (DMSO<sub>2</sub>).

As a cutting agent for methamphetamine, MSM offers many advantages. Pure MSM is an odorless, white, crystalline powder that is highly soluble and mixes readily with most substances without leaving a residue. MSM usually is added to methamphetamine during the final stages of production. Methamphetamine cut with MSM often appears to be uncut because after the chemicals are combined and the mixture cools, the MSM recrystallizes, resembling pure methamphetamine.

MSM distributors claim the substance is beneficial as a pain reliever and for animal and human connective tissue regeneration. Other alleged benefits for both animals and humans include the reduction of inhalant allergen reactions; relief from the symptoms of lung dysfunction; relief of leg and back cramps, muscle spasms, and general soreness; improved overall health; and elevated mood. MSM is readily available in powder and tablet forms at livestock feed and equine tack stores, "super" pet food chains, warehouse stores, human nutrition centers, and upscale grocery stores. MSM is available through mail order equine and veterinary supply catalogs and on numerous Internet sites.

The percentage of drug-related federal sentences in Florida involving methamphetamine was significantly lower than the national percentage each year from FY1997 through FY2001. According to USSC data, 5.5 percent of drug-related federal sentences in Florida in FY2001 were

methamphetamine-related, compared with 14.2 percent nationwide. Nonetheless, the number of federal sentences involving methamphetamine in Florida increased dramatically from 65 in FY1997 to 106 in FY2001.

**Violence**

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Methamphetamine production, distribution, and abuse often are associated with violent crime in Florida, particularly in rural areas. According to federal, state, and local law enforcement officials, Mexican criminal groups, Caucasian and Mexican local independent dealers, and gangs such as Vice Lords and Sureños 13 that distribute methamphetamine in Florida often commit assault, homicide, and black market weapons violations. Many methamphetamine abusers and producers also commit

crimes such as spousal abuse and child neglect. Further, local methamphetamine laboratory operators, distributors, and abusers often carry pistols, modified shotguns, or other weapons.

Long-term methamphetamine addicts often display psychotic behavior such as paranoia and experience auditory and visual hallucinations or mood disturbances and have violent tendencies. As the drug's euphoric effects begin to diminish,

### **Methamphetamine Abusers Kill Man With a Hammer**

On May 27, 2002, local law enforcement officials discovered the body of a 19-year-old Caucasian male in Polk County. The body had 17 penetrating, blunt force wounds to the head and multiple contusions, abrasions, and lacerations to the skull. Two young Caucasian males, charged with kidnapping and violently beating the victim with a hammer, admitted that they were openly abusing methamphetamine at a party when the victim interrupted a conversation they were having with the owner of the home where the party took place.

Source: Polk County Bureau of Criminal Investigations.

the user enters a stage called tweaking. It is during this stage that the user is most prone to violence, delusions, and paranoid behavior. These unpredictable and violent behaviors prompted law enforcement agencies in Florida to offer training and establish guidelines for officers encountering a methamphetamine abuser. Officers are advised to stay 7 to 10 feet away from the abuser because moving closer could be perceived as threatening. Officers also are advised not to shine bright lights at the user, who may become violent if blinded.

In addition to the crime and violence associated with methamphetamine distribution and abuse, methamphetamine production adversely affects the environment and endangers the lives of those who live at or near the production site. Children, law enforcement personnel, and local residents increasingly are exposed to the dangers

## **Production**

Most of the methamphetamine available in Florida is produced in high volume laboratories in California, Mexico, and southwestern states using the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method or is produced locally using the Birch reduction method. (See text box on page 24.) Local production typically occurs in rural areas of the state, particularly in northern Florida. A significant

### **Tweaking**

During the tweaking stage, the abuser often has not slept in days and, consequently, is extremely irritable. The "tweaker" also craves more methamphetamine, which results in frustration and contributes to anxiety and restlessness. In this stage the methamphetamine abuser may become violent without provocation. Case histories indicate that tweakers have reacted violently to the mere sight of a police officer's uniform.

posed by the explosive and toxic chemicals used to produce methamphetamine. Methamphetamine laboratories create 5 to 7 pounds of toxic waste for every pound of methamphetamine produced. Most of the toxic residue from methamphetamine production is dumped in the local area, killing vegetation and contaminating water supplies and soil.

### **Chemicals Used to Produce Methamphetamine Dumped in a Drain**

In January 2002 the Ocala Police Department arrested two individuals for producing methamphetamine in a motel room and dumping the chemicals down the bathtub drain. Because of the hazards associated with methamphetamine production, local law enforcement officials evacuated the motel, closed a road near the motel, and requested federal assistance with the laboratory cleanup.

Source: Ocala Police Department.

amount of methamphetamine also is produced in central Florida. Methamphetamine occasionally is produced in southern Florida. Mexican DTOs and criminal groups are the dominant producers of methamphetamine in California, Mexico, and southwestern states. Local independent Caucasian dealers typically produce methamphetamine in Florida.



Methamphetamine producers in Florida often steal the chemicals necessary for production. Most local methamphetamine production occurs in single-family homes, apartments, storage buildings, cars, and wooded areas. According to local law enforcement officials, local methamphetamine producers frequently steal anhydrous ammonia—a common fertilizer—from farms, often placing the liquid in containers such as propane tanks, coolers, fire extinguishers, and other containers. Many of these containers are not designed to store anhydrous ammonia, which is highly corrosive and toxic, leading to a potential hazard. When collecting other essential chemicals such as pseudoephedrine, methamphetamine producers often avoid large retail stores in which employees are more likely to report suspicious purchases or detect thefts. Many prefer instead to collect ephedrine from convenience stores in

inner-city neighborhoods and poor sections of rural communities.

Methamphetamine laboratories in Florida are seized at an increasing rate. According to EPIC, the number of methamphetamine laboratories seized by federal, state, and local law enforcement officials in Florida fluctuated but increased dramatically overall from 1 in 1997 to 27 in 2001. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials also seized 63 methamphetamine laboratories in the first 9 months of 2002. The number of methamphetamine laboratories seized in Florida is actually higher than the number cited by EPIC, primarily because state and local law enforcement officials are not always required to report their seizures. Many local officials in northern and central Florida report having seized more methamphetamine laboratories in 2002 than in any prior year.

### 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 DTOs and criminal groups.

**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.

**Iodine/hypophosphorous acid.** The principal chemicals are ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, iodine, and hypophosphorous acid. The required hydriodic acid in this variation of the hydriodic acid/red phosphorus method is produced by the reaction of iodine in water with hypophosphorous acid. Known as the hypo method, this method yields lower quality d-methamphetamine. Hypophosphorous acid is more prone than red phosphorus to cause a fire and can produce deadly phosphine gas.

**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 traditionally was associated with outlaw motorcycle gangs.

## Transportation

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Mexican DTOs and criminal groups, the dominant transporters of methamphetamine, usually smuggle the drug in commercial and private vehicles from Mexico, California, and southwestern states into Florida. Law enforcement officials in Florida seized 5 kilograms of methamphetamine from commercial and private vehicles as part of Operation Pipeline in 2001, and USCS officials in Florida seized almost 3 kilograms of methamphetamine from similar conveyances that year.

Methamphetamine also is transported into Florida by couriers on commercial aircraft and via package delivery services. Couriers often conceal methamphetamine taped to their body or hide the drug in clothing. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials report that Mexican criminal groups often hire male Mexican couriers, but Caucasian females are used at an increasing rate because they are believed to attract less attention from law enforcement officials. Methamphetamine transported via package delivery services sometimes is concealed in auto parts, stuffed

## Distribution

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Mexican DTOs and criminal groups dominate the wholesale distribution of methamphetamine statewide. They typically sell pound quantities of methamphetamine to Caucasian and other Mexican criminal groups who then sell ounce quantities to local independent Caucasian and Mexican dealers, the dominant retail distributors in the state. Gangs such as Latin Kings, Vice Lords, and Sureños 13 also distribute retail quantities of methamphetamine in Florida.

Retail quantities (1 gram to one-quarter gram) of methamphetamine usually are packaged in small plastic bags and sold at various locations in Florida. Local independent Caucasian dealers often sell methamphetamine at private residences, bars, housing projects, mobile home parks, and occasionally at raves or techno parties. Mexican

### **New Mexico State Police Seize Methamphetamine Destined for Florida**

In August 2002 New Mexico State Police arrested two Mexican American males from Florida and seized 15 pounds of methamphetamine that were being transported in a private automobile from California to Dade City. The men initially were pulled over for a traffic violation; they were traveling well below the 75 mile-per-hour speed limit, causing a line of cars and tractor-trailers to back up behind them.

Source: New Mexico State Police.

animals, or other items. USCS officials in Florida seized over 7.0 kilograms of methamphetamine from commercial aircraft in 2001, and federal, state, and local law enforcement officials seized 10.4 kilograms of methamphetamine transported on commercial aircraft as part of Operation Jetway in 2001.

### **Methamphetamine Distributor Pleads Guilty**

In May 2002 a Mexican American, the head of a methamphetamine distribution organization based in Haines City (Polk County), pleaded guilty to distributing multiple pounds of methamphetamine each week in that area. The organization laundered as much as \$30,000 a week through the purchase and sale of used cars at a dealership owned by the defendant.

Source: U.S. Attorney's Office Middle District of Florida.

criminal groups and local independent dealers as well as Hispanic gang members usually distribute methamphetamine at open-air drug markets and on street corners. Local methamphetamine producers frequently consume most of what they

produce; however, they also sell small quantities of methamphetamine to friends, family members,

and associates, principally to fund further methamphetamine production.

## Marijuana

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Marijuana is the most widely available and frequently abused illicit drug in Florida. Most of the marijuana available in Florida is produced in Jamaica or Mexico. Significant quantities of marijuana also are produced in Florida and other U.S. states—particularly California and southwestern states—as well as in Canada and Colombia. Marijuana frequently is smuggled to Florida from Jamaica aboard maritime vessels, on private or commercial aircraft, or via package delivery services. Marijuana also is transported from Canada, Mexico, and southwestern states in private vehicles, trucks, via package delivery services, and by couriers or air cargo shipments on commercial airlines. Colombian DTOs and criminal groups or groups working on their behalf use the same methods to transport marijuana south from New York into Florida and use couriers or cargo shipments on commercial airlines to smuggle marijuana from South America. Jacksonville and Miami are regional distribution centers for wholesale and retail quantities of marijuana.

Jamaican and Mexican criminal groups are the most prominent wholesale distributors of marijuana in Florida; however, no specific organization or group controls the majority of wholesale marijuana distribution in the state. Jamaican, Mexican, African American, Caucasian, Cuban and other Caribbean criminal groups; local independent African American and Caucasian dealers; and gangs such as Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, Vice Lords, and Sureños 13 are the most prominent midlevel and retail distributors of marijuana in the state. At the retail level marijuana usually is packaged in plastic bags selling for \$5 and \$10—known, respectively, as nickel and dime bags—and distributed at low-income housing areas, open-air drug markets, and in economically depressed rural areas in Florida. Marijuana also is sold to established contacts at bars and nightclubs, from some businesses and private homes, and on college, high school, and middle school campuses.

## Abuse

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Treatment data indicate that marijuana is commonly abused in Florida. The number of marijuana-related treatment admissions to publicly funded facilities was second only to the number for cocaine abuse each year from 1997 through 2000 and was higher than the number for every other illicit drug in 2001. According to TEDS data, the number of marijuana-related treatment admissions increased from 12,146 in 1997 to 14,356 in 2001, peaking at 17,057 in 1999. (See Table 3 on page 7.) The number of marijuana-related treatment admissions per 100,000 population (133) in Florida exceeded the number per 100,000 population nationwide (103) in 1999, the most recent year for which these data are available.

Miami has a significant number of ED mentions associated with marijuana abuse. According to DAWN data, the number of marijuana-related ED mentions in Miami increased steadily from 1,024 in 1997 to 1,932 in 2001. The rate of marijuana-related ED mentions per 100,000 population in Miami also increased, from 55 in 1997 to 94 in 2001.

Survey data indicate that the rate of marijuana abuse in Florida is comparable to the national percentage. According to the 1999 and the 2000 NHSDA, 4.7 percent of Florida residents surveyed reported having abused marijuana in the month prior to the survey, compared to 4.8 percent nationwide. Further, Florida residents in the 18 to

25 age group reported the highest percentage (13.1%) of past month marijuana abuse.

The percentage of high school students in Florida reporting having abused marijuana at least once in their lifetime is statistically comparable to the national percentage. According to the 2001 YRBS, 40.2 percent of Florida high school students surveyed reported having abused marijuana at least once in their lifetime, compared to 42.4 percent nationwide. Further, 23.1 percent of those

students reported having abused marijuana in the 30 days prior to the survey, compared to 23.9 percent nationally.

Marijuana was detected often among adult male arrestees in Fort Lauderdale and Miami in 2000. According to ADAM data, 43.3 percent of male arrestees in Fort Lauderdale and 38.5 percent of male arrestees in Miami tested positive for marijuana abuse in 2000. (See Table 2 on page 6.)

## Availability

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Marijuana is the most widely available drug in Florida. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials throughout the state report that marijuana is readily available in every county. Marijuana was seized more frequently than any other illicit drug in Florida each year from 1997 through 2001. According to FDSS data, the amount of marijuana seized by federal law enforcement officials in Florida fluctuated but decreased overall from 33,439 kilograms in 1997 to 30,184 kilograms in 2001. (See Table 1 on page 5.)

Both hydroponic marijuana and commercial-grade marijuana are readily available in Florida. Hydroponically produced marijuana is considerably more expensive than commercial-grade marijuana. According to the DEA Miami Division, pound

quantities of commercial-grade marijuana sold for \$450 to \$1,500 statewide in the second quarter of FY2002, while pound quantities of hydroponically produced marijuana sold for \$2,500 to \$5,000. Ounce quantities of commercial-grade marijuana sold for \$50 to \$150 throughout Florida in that quarter, and hydroponically produced marijuana sold for \$300 to \$500 per ounce.

The percentage of marijuana-related federal sentences in Florida was significantly lower than the national percentage each year from FY1997 through FY2001. According to USSC data, 14.0 percent of drug-related federal sentences in Florida in FY2001 were marijuana-related, compared with 32.8 percent nationwide.

## Violence

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The level of violence directly attributed to marijuana distribution in Florida is low. However, gangs that engage in polydrug distribution such as Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, Vice Lords, and Sureños 13 often commit violent crimes to protect their product and turf. Other criminal groups likewise resort to violence to protect their marijuana distribution activities. In April 2002 the North Miami Beach Police Department investigated two homicides that were directly attributed to marijuana distribution. Both of these incidents involved

members of Haitian and African American criminal groups battling over turf in the Miami area.

There is very little violence associated with marijuana abuse in Florida. The effects of the drug often depend upon the abuser's expectations. While low doses of marijuana tend to induce relaxation, high doses may cause image distortion, a loss of personal identity, fantasies, and hallucinations. In Florida marijuana occasionally is laced with other drugs, including PCP (phenylcyclidine) and crack cocaine. These adulterants

**Florida Drug Threat Assessment**

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substantially alter the effects and toxicity of the product, making it more likely that an abuser will become violent.

Cannabis cultivation sometimes is associated with violent crime in Florida. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials in the state report that cannabis growers sometimes use trip wires,

beds of nails, solar-powered electric fences, and explosives to secure outdoor cultivation sites and to deter intruders. According to Florida Department of Law Enforcement Domestic Marijuana Eradication Program data, federal, state, and local law enforcement officials seized 42 firearms from the 551 grow sites detected in Florida in 2001.

**Production**

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Significant quantities of marijuana are produced in Florida; however, most of the marijuana available in the state is produced in Jamaica or Mexico. Additional quantities of marijuana are produced in other U.S. states—particularly California and southwestern states—as well as in Canada and Colombia. According to Florida Department of Law Enforcement Domestic Marijuana Eradication Program data, federal, state, and local law enforcement officials eradicated 28,206 cannabis plants in Florida in 2001. These plants were cultivated both indoors and outdoors in 58 of the state’s 67 counties. However, 63 percent of all the cannabis plants eradicated in Florida that year had been cultivated in 12 counties—Alachua, Brevard, Duval, Gadsden, Hillsborough, Holmes, Jackson, Lee, Miami-Dade, Okeechobee, Orange, and Santa Rosa.

Cannabis plants are cultivated both indoors and outdoors in the state. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials indicate that aggressive aerial detection missions and occasional drought conditions have, at least in part, contributed to a shift from large outdoor grows to indoor grows and smaller, more widely dispersed outdoor grows. According to DEA Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program data, the number of outdoor-cultivated cannabis plants eradicated in the state decreased from 23,796 in 2000 to 13,055 in 2001, while the number of indoor-cultivated plants eradicated remained relatively stable with 15,343 in 2000 and 15,151 in 2001. According to DEA statistics, Florida ranked third after California (113,009 plants) and Washington (25,799 plants) for the number of cannabis plants seized from indoor grows in the United States in 2001.

**Criminal Group Used Multiple Indoor Sites to Cultivate Cannabis**

In October 2002, 18 members of a Caucasian criminal group were convicted on drug-related charges for cultivating cannabis in South Florida. Group members purchased a total of 13 houses in Palm Beach County and other southern counties and established grow sites at each of the locations. Each house was situated on a large lot—over an acre of land—and was outfitted with special lighting to enhance cultivation. Group members bypassed electric meters to avoid excessive electric bills and laundered drug proceeds through the payroll department of an air-conditioning sales company. According to law enforcement officials, each site contained approximately 240 cannabis plants.

Source: U.S. Attorney’s Office Southern District of Florida.

## Transportation

Marijuana from foreign and domestic sources is transported into Florida by various groups and methods. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials report that marijuana frequently is smuggled into Florida from Jamaica aboard maritime vessels, on private or commercial aircraft, or via package delivery services. Marijuana also is transported from Canada, Mexico, and southwestern states in private vehicles, commercial trucks, via package delivery services, and by couriers or in cargo shipments on commercial airlines. Colombian DTOs and criminal groups or groups working on their behalf use the same methods to transport marijuana south from New York to Florida and use couriers or cargo shipments on commercial airlines to smuggle marijuana from South America.

### Maritime Marijuana Seizures

On October 20, 2002, a boarding crew from a U.S. Coast Guard (USCG) cutter seized 1,075 pounds of marijuana from a 28-foot private fishing boat during a standard safety inspection. The seizure occurred in the Florida Straits approximately 30 miles east of Miami. The marijuana was secreted in the cabin and in storage compartments throughout the vessel. Two male U.S. citizens were arrested. The origin of the marijuana is unknown.

Source: USCG.

On February 28, 2002, USCS agents seized 2 tons of marijuana aboard a containerized vessel at the Port of Miami. The marijuana was concealed in a containerized shipment of yams. The vessel arrived from Kingston, Jamaica.

Source: USCS.

A significant portion of the marijuana transported into Florida, particularly the southern part of the state, is smuggled on maritime vessels. Some vessels arrive in Florida directly from source or transit countries in South and Central

America and the Caribbean. Others rendezvous with maritime vessels acting as motherships or retrieve marijuana from airdrops. Large shipments of marijuana typically are smuggled into the state aboard containerized cargo vessels, coastal freighters, and go-fast boats. Smaller quantities typically are smuggled by couriers aboard cruise ships and via small watercraft. Marijuana smuggled aboard containerized cargo vessels typically is intermingled with goods inside a container or within the walls of the container. Marijuana smuggled aboard coastal freighters usually is intermingled with bulk cargo; secreted inside fuel tanks, water tanks, or other voids in the vessels' structures; or placed in hidden compartments designed to conceal drugs. Marijuana smuggled aboard go-fast boats usually is covered with a tarp, whereas marijuana smuggled aboard other small watercraft typically is concealed within storage compartments. Drug couriers aboard cruise ships typically conceal marijuana on their person or in their luggage. Couriers aboard cruise ships also stash marijuana on the ship for retrieval after the vessel has docked or pass marijuana to corrupt crew members. USCS officials in Florida seized over 29,606 kilograms of marijuana aboard maritime vessels in 2001. This amount was greater than the amount of any other illicit drug seized aboard maritime vessels that year.

### Airdrops and Mothership Operations

Airdrops and mothership operations generally occur in Caribbean waters, the Florida Straits, or the Bahamas. Drug transporters most commonly use go-fast boats and fishing vessels to retrieve airdropped packages of marijuana or to conduct a rendezvous with a mothership; however, other types of vessels also are used. Packages of airdropped marijuana usually are attached to fishing buoys by a cable.

Source: Blue Lightning Strike Force.

Noncommercial vessels are used to smuggle marijuana into Florida at an increasing rate. According to the USCG, an increasing number of DTOs and criminal groups use noncommercial vessels to smuggle marijuana and other drugs into South Florida from points throughout the Caribbean, especially via the Bahamas. EPIC reported that federal, state, and local law enforcement officials seized 6,944 kilograms of marijuana entering Florida via noncommercial vessels in 2001, compared with 2,027 kilograms in 2000.

Significant quantities of marijuana also are transported into Florida, particularly the northern and central parts of the state, in private and commercial vehicles. Marijuana transported in commercial vehicles often is intermingled with legitimate cargo, while marijuana transported in private vehicles often is concealed in hidden compartments. In December 2001 DEA agents in Orlando seized 1,236 pounds of marijuana from a criminal group that had transported 5,000 to 10,000 pounds of marijuana in private and commercial vehicles from Texas into Florida over a 2-year period. According to DEA, hundred- to multihundred-pound shipments of marijuana are transported on I-10 in private and commercial vehicles into and through the Florida Panhandle area daily. USCS officials in Florida seized 4,691 kilograms of marijuana from commercial and

private vehicles in 2001. This amount was greater than the amount of any other illicit drug seized from commercial and private vehicles that year. Law enforcement officials in Florida seized 320.1 kilograms of marijuana as part of Operation Pipeline in 2001.

Commercial and private aircraft and package delivery services also are used to transport marijuana into Florida. Marijuana shipments smuggled into Florida on aircraft are concealed using various means. Couriers often conceal marijuana taped to their body or hide the drug in clothing. In February 2001 DEA officials in Orlando arrested two individuals and seized 23 pounds of marijuana that were concealed on their persons under exercise belts made of spandex. Marijuana also is hidden in luggage with clothing or inside false compartments. Marijuana in air cargo shipments typically is packaged in a container or box, sometimes intermingled with legitimate products. According to the North Florida HIDTA, hydroponically produced marijuana smuggled from British Columbia, Canada, referred to as BC Bud, increasingly is transported via private aircraft directly into Florida. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials in Florida seized 675.6 kilograms of marijuana transported on private and commercial aircraft as part of Operation Jetway in FY2001.

## Distribution

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Jacksonville and Miami are regional distribution centers for wholesale quantities of marijuana. State and local law enforcement officials in at least 10 states responding to the NDTs 2002 reported that Florida is a supply area for marijuana available in their jurisdictions. Some states reporting Florida as a supply area for marijuana are Alabama, Georgia, Illinois, Maine, North Carolina, New York, Rhode Island, South Carolina, Virginia, and West Virginia.

Jamaican and Mexican criminal groups are the most prominent wholesale distributors of marijuana in Florida; however, no specific

organization or group controls the majority of wholesale marijuana distribution in the state. The North Florida HIDTA reports that Mexican criminal groups are the dominant wholesale distributors of marijuana in northern Florida, while the Central Florida HIDTA reports that Jamaican criminal groups are the dominant wholesale distributors of marijuana in central and southern Florida. Colombian, Bahamian, and other Caribbean criminal groups and African American and Hispanic gangs also sell wholesale quantities of marijuana in the state. Many of these criminal groups and gangs sell multikilogram to

multihundred-kilogram quantities of marijuana to midlevel distributors who, in turn, distribute kilogram to pound quantities of marijuana to retail distributors.

Various criminal groups, local independent dealers, and gangs distribute midlevel and retail quantities of marijuana in Florida. Jamaican, Mexican, African American, Caucasian, Cuban and other Caribbean criminal groups; local independent African American and Caucasian dealers; and gangs such as Gangster Disciples, Latin Kings, Vice Lords, and Sureños 13 are the most prominent midlevel and retail distributors of marijuana in the state. At the retail level marijuana usually is packaged in plastic bags selling for \$5

and \$10 each—known, respectively, as nickel and dime bags. Retail quantities of marijuana are distributed at low-income housing areas, open-air drug markets, and in economically depressed rural areas in Florida. However, marijuana also is sold to established contacts at bars and nightclubs, from some businesses and private homes, and on college, high school, and middle school campuses. Retail distribution of marijuana in Florida is increasingly competitive. Many retail distributors add adulterants such as powdered cocaine, ketamine, methamphetamine, embalming fluid laced with PCP, and other substances to low potency marijuana in an attempt to create a unique product that will attract repeat customers.

## MDMA

MDMA (also known as ecstasy, Adam, E, X, and XTC) frequently is widely available and abused in Florida. The drug is most prevalent in or near large metropolitan areas including Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando, and Tampa and in cities with major colleges or universities such as Gainesville and Tallahassee. MDMA increasingly is available in smaller cities and towns throughout the state. Most MDMA available in Florida is produced in the Netherlands and Belgium; however, MDMA sometimes is produced locally. Israeli and Russian DTOs and criminal groups are the dominant transporters of MDMA into Florida. Western European, Caribbean, Colombian, Dominican and, to a lesser extent, U.S.-based Caucasian criminal groups also transport significant quantities of MDMA into Florida. Most of the MDMA transported into Florida is smuggled from source or transit countries by couriers on passenger airlines or via package delivery services. MDMA occasionally is smuggled aboard maritime vessels arriving from foreign countries, by air freight, or is transported in commercial and

private vehicles from other states. South Florida is a regional distribution center for wholesale quantities of MDMA. Israeli, Russian, Colombian, and Western European DTOs and criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of MDMA in Florida. Dominican, other Caribbean and, to a lesser extent, U.S.-based Caucasian criminal groups also distribute wholesale quantities of MDMA in Florida. Wholesale distributors typically supply multithousand-tablet quantities of MDMA to midlevel distributors who, in turn, supply up to multihundred-tablet quantities to retail distributors. Local independent Caucasian dealers are the primary retail distributors of MDMA in Florida; however, African American criminal groups, gangs, and local independent dealers are increasingly involved in the retail distribution of MDMA. Distributors are usually upper- and middle-class Caucasian teenagers and young adults who often abuse MDMA as well. They typically distribute MDMA tablets at raves or techno parties, private parties, nightclubs, and on high school and college campuses.



## Abuse

MDMA, a Schedule I drug under the Controlled Substances Act, is a stimulant with mild hallucinogenic properties. It is readily available in Florida and continues to be more commonly abused than any other club drug in the state. Sometimes called the hug drug, abusers claim that the drug helps them to be more “in touch” with others and “opens channels of communication.” However, abuse of the drug can cause psychological problems similar to those associated with methamphetamine and cocaine abuse including confusion, depression, sleeplessness, anxiety, and paranoia. The physical effects can include muscle tension, involuntary teeth clenching, blurred vision, and increased heart rate and blood pressure. MDMA abuse also can cause a marked increase in body temperature leading to muscle breakdown, kidney failure, cardiovascular system failure, stroke, or seizure as reported in some fatal cases. Researchers suggest MDMA abuse may result in long-term and sometimes permanent damage to parts of the brain that are critical to thought and memory.

### **MDMA Abuse at Raves and Techno Parties**

Throughout the 1990s high energy, all-night dances known as raves or techno parties that feature hard-pounding techno music and flashing laser lights, increased in popularity among teenagers and young adults. Raves occur in most metropolitan areas of the country. They can be held at either permanent dance clubs or temporary weekend event sites set up in abandoned warehouses, open fields, empty buildings, or civic centers. MDMA is one of the most popular drugs used at raves. Rave managers often sell water, pacifiers, and glow sticks at rave parties. “Ravers” drink water to offset dehydration caused by MDMA; use pacifiers to prevent the grinding of teeth, which is a common side effect of abusing MDMA; and wave glow sticks in front of their eyes because MDMA stimulates light perception.

The number of MDMA-related deaths and ED mentions indicate that MDMA is frequently abused in Florida. According to the *2001 Report of Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons* by Florida Medical Examiners, there were 92 deaths in the state in 2001 in which MDMA was detected in the decedent’s body. According to DAWN data, the number of MDMA-related ED mentions in Miami increased from 28 in 1997 to 184 in 2001. The rate of MDMA-related ED mentions per 100,000 population in Miami likewise increased from one in 1997 to nine in 2001. In 2001 Miami ranked second after San Francisco (10) in the rate of MDMA-related ED mentions among 21 metropolitan areas reporting to DAWN.

Caucasian teenagers and young adults are the primary abusers of MDMA in Florida. Various federal, state, and local law enforcement officials report that most Caucasian abusers in Florida are between the ages of 16 and 30. They also report that the level of MDMA abuse by African Americans, particularly college students, in Florida is increasing.

Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials and treatment providers report that some MDMA abusers in Florida take three to five MDMA tablets at a time, a practice referred to as stacking. These officials also report that some MDMA abusers, particularly college students, combine MDMA with LSD (lysergic acid diethylamide), a practice referred to as trolling. Further, the Miami-based Up Front Drug Information Center reports that MDMA often is taken in conjunction with benzodiazepines and other prescription drugs as abusers attempt to alleviate the stimulant effects of MDMA in a practice referred to as candy flipping.

Several treatment officials report that some MDMA abusers are now snorting or injecting the drug. Those who inject the drug are primarily intravenous heroin abusers or friends and acquaintances of intravenous heroin abusers.

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## Availability

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MDMA frequently is available in Florida, particularly in or near large metropolitan areas including Jacksonville, Miami, Orlando, and Tampa and in cities with major colleges or universities including Gainesville and Tallahassee. MDMA increasingly is available in smaller cities and towns throughout the state. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials in Panama City and Daytona Beach report that the availability of MDMA in their jurisdictions increases significantly during spring break each year.

MDMA is available in tablet, capsule and, to a lesser extent, powdered forms. Most of the MDMA available in Florida is in tablet form and printed with a logo. Some of the most popular logos in Florida include crowns, @ symbols, HP (Harry Potter), and corporate logos such as Mitsubishi and VW.

The price of MDMA in Florida varies based on the quantity sold. Wholesale and midlevel quantities of MDMA—100 to 1,000 tablets—typically sold for \$4 to \$16 in the second quarter of FY2002, according to the DEA Miami Division. A 100-tablet quantity is sometimes known as a jar and a 1,000-tablet quantity, a tank. DEA also reported that retail quantities of MDMA sold for \$10 to \$27.50 per tablet during that period.

Seizure statistics indicate that MDMA is increasingly available in Florida. According to DEA System to Retrieve Information from Drug Evidence (STRIDE) data, federal law enforcement officials in Florida seized almost 224,000 MDMA tablets in Florida in 1999, 1.5 million tablets in 2000, and almost 1.9 million tablets in 2001, the only years for which these data are available. In addition, in 2001 more MDMA was seized in Florida than in any other state.

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## Violence

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The level of violence directly attributed to MDMA distribution and abuse in Florida is low. However, the South Florida HIDTA reports that

some MDMA distributors do resort to violence to protect their product and turf. The abuse of MDMA is rarely associated with violent crime in Florida.

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## Production

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MDMA sometimes is produced in Florida; however, most MDMA available in the state is produced in the Netherlands and Belgium. In May 2002 local law enforcement officials arrested two Caucasian males and seized an

MDMA laboratory in Hillsborough County, just east of Tampa. For about 1 year these men used the laboratory to produce approximately 1,000 tablets of MDMA per week.

## Transportation

Israeli and Russian DTOs and criminal groups are the dominant transporters of MDMA into Florida. Western European, Caribbean (primarily Dominican), Colombian and, to a lesser extent, U.S.-based Caucasian criminal groups also transport significant quantities of MDMA into Florida. Most of the MDMA transported into Florida is smuggled from source or transit countries by couriers on passenger airlines or via package delivery services. MDMA occasionally is smuggled aboard maritime vessels and by air freight arriving from foreign countries or is transported in commercial and private vehicles from other states.

Law enforcement reporting and seizure data indicate the extent to which MDMA is smuggled into Florida via package delivery services and couriers aboard commercial aircraft. The Central Florida HIDTA reports that package delivery services are the most common method used to smuggle MDMA into Florida. In April 2001 USCS inspectors at Miami International Airport seized 35,000 MDMA tablets from a package sent from Amsterdam, the Netherlands. USCS officials in Florida seized almost 18 kilograms of MDMA sent via package delivery services to Florida in 2001. The Central Florida HIDTA also reports that couriers from Amsterdam, Paris, Frankfurt, and other European cities frequently travel to Florida with multithousand-tablet shipments of MDMA concealed in false compartments in their luggage. On March 20, 2002, USCS agents at Miami International Airport arrested a Spanish national and seized almost 59,000 MDMA tablets from his false-sided suitcase. The man arrived on a flight from Zurich, Switzerland. USCS officials in Florida seized almost 1.5 million MDMA tablets that were transported aboard commercial aircraft in 2001. Federal law enforcement officials report that European-based MDMA trafficking organizations and criminal groups are recruiting European nationals vacationing in the Dominican Republic, a popular and economical European tourist destination, to transport MDMA from Europe to Florida.

### MDMA Transported From Florida By Bus

On September 10, 2002, law enforcement officers assigned to the North Florida HIDTA Currency and Narcotics Transportation Interdiction Initiative arrested three drug couriers and seized a total of approximately 250,000 MDMA tablets and over \$13,000 in cash. All three couriers were traveling by bus from Fort Lauderdale to New York City and were apprehended en route at the Jacksonville bus terminal. The drugs were found concealed in the couriers' checked luggage. The MDMA tablets were packaged in plastic bags and stamped with a fish logo. The money was found in one courier's carry-on luggage. The officers reported that the couriers—two from Suriname and one from French Guyana—denied knowing one another. Each claimed that an unidentified individual provided the luggage containing the MDMA at the Fort Lauderdale bus station.

Source: Jacksonville County Sheriff's Office.

MDMA occasionally is smuggled into Florida aboard maritime vessels. According to the North Florida HIDTA, MDMA sometimes is smuggled from source countries to the Dominican Republic or other Caribbean nations, then smuggled aboard commercial vessels, especially cruise ships, into Florida. In February 2001 USCS officials at the Port of Miami seized 3,000 MDMA tablets and 86 kilograms of cocaine aboard a cruise ship. This was the first time a significant quantity of MDMA was seized aboard a cruise ship arriving from the Caribbean.

U.S.-based Caucasian criminal groups and local independent dealers transport small amounts of MDMA in commercial and private vehicles into Florida. Local law enforcement officials in northern Florida report that Caucasian criminal groups and local independent dealers often travel to Atlanta and other southeastern cities in private vehicles, purchase MDMA, and return to Florida to distribute the drug. On March 13, 2002, DEA agents arrested

four individuals in Lakeland and seized 25,900 MDMA tablets that were being transported in a private vehicle. USCS officials in Florida seized almost 14,000 MDMA tablets from commercial

and private vehicles in 2001. Law enforcement officials in Florida seized 48,186 dosage units of MDMA transported using similar conveyances as part of Operation Pipeline that year.

## Distribution

Florida is a regional distribution center for wholesale quantities of MDMA. State and local law enforcement officials in six states—Georgia, Kentucky, North Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia—responding to the NDTs 2002 reported that Miami is a supply area for MDMA available in their jurisdictions. Some of these respondents also reported that wholesale quantities of MDMA often are distributed from Orlando and Tampa.

Many of the same groups that transport MDMA into Florida dominate the wholesale distribution of the drug. Israeli, Russian, Colombian, and Western European DTOs and criminal groups are the primary wholesale distributors of MDMA in Florida. However, Dominican, other Caribbean and, to a lesser extent, U.S.-based Caucasian criminal groups also distribute wholesale quantities of MDMA in Florida. These DTOs and criminal groups typically supply multithousand-tablet quantities of MDMA to midlevel distributors who, in turn, supply up to multihundred-tablet quantities to retail distributors. In February 2001 federal and local law enforcement officials in Miami seized 187,500 MDMA tablets and arrested several Colombian nationals who distributed MDMA at the wholesale level.

Local independent Caucasian dealers are the primary retail distributors of MDMA in Florida. These dealers, usually upper- and middle-class

### MDMA Distribution Ring Dismantled

On September 22, 2001, federal, state, and local law enforcement officials arrested 16 individuals who distributed MDMA and seized 7 vehicles, 9,700 MDMA tablets, 16 ounces of GHB, 7 ounces of marijuana, 1 ounce of cocaine, \$243,000 in cash, and an assault rifle. These distributors sold thousands of MDMA tablets and various quantities of cocaine at six nightclubs in Daytona Beach during the year preceding their arrests. At least one of the distributors, the head of the organization, also had distributed MDMA tablets in Orlando, Jacksonville, and Melbourne and in states such as North Carolina and South Carolina.

Source: Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

Caucasian teenagers and young adults, often abuse MDMA as well. In addition, local independent Hispanic dealers and African American gangs sometimes distribute retail quantities of MDMA in Florida. MDMA tablets typically are sold at raves or techno parties, private parties, nightclubs, and on high school and college campuses. Some independent dealers and Caucasian criminal groups in Florida have been producing their own product that they market and sell as ecstasy, but it contains little, if any, MDMA.

## Other Dangerous Drugs

Other dangerous drugs (ODDs) such as GHB, LSD, ketamine, and diverted pharmaceuticals are available and abused in Florida, but to a lesser extent than cocaine, heroin, methamphetamine, marijuana, and MDMA. However, most federal, state, and local law enforcement officials report that the rate of abuse of these dangerous drugs, particularly diverted pharmaceuticals, is increasing more rapidly than for any other drug. Oxycodone, primarily OxyContin, is one of the most commonly diverted pharmaceuticals in Florida. Hydrocodone (Vicodin), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), and benzodiazepines (Xanax, Valium,

and Rohypnol) also are diverted and abused. Diverted pharmaceuticals typically are sold to acquaintances and established customers.

Local independent Caucasian dealers, often middle-class suburban teenagers and young adults, generally are the primary distributors and abusers of most ODDs in Florida. Hallucinogens such as LSD and ketamine and depressants such as GHB and its analogs generally are sold at raves or techno parties, dance clubs, gyms, nightclubs, private parties, high school and college campuses, and over the Internet.

## GHB and Analogs

The threat posed by GHB (gamma-hydroxybutyrate) and its analogs—GBL, BD, GHV, and GVL—is increasing in Florida. GHB is a depressant that occurs naturally in the body and is necessary for full functioning of the brain and central nervous system. Synthetic GHB and its analogs commonly are known as liquid MDMA, scoop, grievous bodily harm, and Georgia home boy. GHB analogs are drugs that possess chemical structures that closely resemble GHB. At lower doses GHB and its analogs cause dizziness, nausea, and visual disturbances. At higher doses unconsciousness, seizure, severe respiratory depression, and coma can occur. GHB and its analogs increasingly have been involved in poisonings, overdoses, sexual assaults, and fatalities in Florida. GHB is eliminated from the body quickly, making detection difficult. GHB can be produced easily from readily obtainable ingredients, one of which is GBL (gamma-butyrolactone), a solvent commonly used as a paint thinner. Once ingested, GBL is converted into GHB in the body. GHB can be produced as a clear liquid, white powder, pill, or capsule. GHB normally has a salty taste, which often is masked by dissolving the drug in flavored liquids. Liquid GHB also can be purchased in colors such as pink, blue, or yellow.

GHB frequently is abused in Florida. The emergency medical service of Escambia County reports that more overdoses result from GHB abuse than from abuse of any other illegal drug in its area. Further, the *2001 Report of Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons* by Florida Medical Examiners indicates that there were 23 deaths in which GHB was detected in the decedent's body in Florida in 2000 and 28 in 2001.

GHB Analogs	
Analog	Chemical/Alternative Name
GBL	gamma-butyrolactone furanone di-hydro dihydrofuranone
BD	1,4-butanediol tetramethylene glycol sucol-B butylene glycol
GVL	gamma-valerolactone 4-pentanolide
GHV	gamma-hydroxyvalerate methyl-GHB

GHB often is available in Florida. Young adults, usually Caucasian, are the principal distributors and abusers of GHB in Florida. According to the DEA Miami Division, liquid GHB sold for \$300 to \$700 per gallon and \$5 to \$10 per dosage unit in the second quarter of FY2002. A capful, typically the size of the cap from a small water bottle, is the most common dosage unit available at the retail level. GHB often is sold at raves or techno parties, dance clubs, gyms, nightclubs, private parties, high school and college campuses, and over the Internet.

### **Largest GHB Seizure in Florida History**

On April 22, 2002, federal, state, and local law enforcement officials arrested three individuals and seized a total of 20 gallons—approximately 160 pounds—of GHB in Orlando and Ponte Vedra Beach. This was the largest GHB seizure in Florida history.

Source: Florida Department of Law Enforcement.

## **LSD**

Also known as acid, boomers, and yellow sunshine, LSD rarely is available or abused in Florida. LSD is a hallucinogen that induces abnormalities in sensory perceptions. The effects of LSD are unpredictable, depending upon the amount taken, the environment in which it is abused, and the abuser's personality, mood, and expectations. The physical effects include dilated pupils, higher body temperature, increased heart rate and blood pressure, sweating, loss of appetite, nausea, numbness, weakness, insomnia, dry mouth, and tremors. Abusers may feel the effects for up to 12 hours. Two long-term disorders associated with LSD are persistent psychosis and hallucinogen persisting perception disorder (flashbacks). High school and college-age individuals are the primary LSD abusers in Florida; they typically administer the drug orally. According to TEDS data, there were 172 hallucinogen-related

treatment admissions to publicly funded treatment facilities in Florida in 2001. Not all of these admissions were LSD-related.

LSD is available in capsule, microdot, pill, and liquid forms and on pieces of blotter paper that have absorbed the drug. Some abusers conceal liquid LSD in breath mint vials or eyedrop bottles. According to the DEA Miami Division, LSD sold for \$3 to \$8 per dosage unit during the second quarter of FY2002.

Most LSD available in the state is produced in northern California and transported into Florida via package delivery services. Local independent Caucasian dealers are the principal wholesale and retail distributors of LSD in the state. LSD typically is distributed at the same venues as GHB.

## **Ketamine**

Also known as K, special K, vitamin K, and cat valium, ketamine presents a low threat to Florida. Ketamine is an injectable anesthetic that is approved for human and animal use. It is sold commercially and is produced in liquid, powder, and tablet forms. The liquid form is injected intramuscularly. Liquid ketamine can be boiled into powdered ketamine, some of which is put into

capsules. In its powdered form ketamine resembles cocaine or methamphetamine and often is snorted or smoked with marijuana or tobacco products. Snorting ketamine is a practice known to ravers as bumping.

Low dose intoxication from ketamine may result in impaired attention, learning ability, and memory; dissociation, which includes out-of-body

**Ketamine Smuggled From Mexico To Florida**

In September 2002 DEA agents in southern Florida arrested 10 individuals and seized over 1,500 vials of ketamine. The drug was smuggled via package delivery services from Mexico through San Diego into Florida, New York, and New Jersey.

Source: U.S. Attorney's Office Southern District of Florida.

and near-death experiences; and hallucinations. High doses of ketamine can cause delirium, amnesia, impaired motor function, high blood pressure, depression, and potentially fatal respiratory problems. Ketamine gained popularity

among abusers in the 1980s when it was discovered that large doses caused reactions similar to those experienced with PCP abuse. Ketamine abusers in the United States and the United Kingdom have reported incidents similar to bad LSD trips. Some abusers have tried to jump from moving vehicles.

Ketamine usually is diverted from legitimate sources, primarily veterinary clinics, and typically is sold at raves and other social venues or to known associates. Local independent Caucasian dealers are the principal wholesale and retail distributors of the drug in Florida. According to the DEA Miami Division, ketamine sold for \$40 per vial in Florida in the second quarter of FY2002.

**Diverted Pharmaceuticals**

Diverted pharmaceuticals frequently are abused in Florida. Oxycodone, primarily OxyContin, is more commonly diverted than any other pharmaceutical in Florida. Hydrocodone (Vicodin), hydromorphone (Dilaudid), and benzodiazepines (Xanax, Valium, and Rohypnol) also are diverted and abused. Oxycodone is a synthetic opioid analgesic used for relieving moderate to severe chronic pain. It is similar to hydrocodone but is more potent and has a greater potential for abuse. Hydromorphone is an opioid used to relieve pain by acting on specific areas of the spinal cord and brain that process pain signals from nerves throughout the body. Benzodiazepines are minor tranquilizers that reduce stress and anxiety, relax muscles, and induce sleep. Benzodiazepines can produce physiological and psychological dependence and can be lethal.

The diversion and abuse of oxycodone, primarily OxyContin, represent the most significant pharmaceutical drug threat to Florida. OxyContin abusers usually crush the tablets to destroy their controlled-release coating and then snort or inject the drug to obtain a heroin-like high. According to the *Report of Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons* by Florida Medical Examiners, oxycodones caused more deaths than any other prescription drug in

**Common Pharmaceutical Diversion Methods**

Pharmaceuticals usually are illegally obtained through theft, "doctor shopping," prescription forgery, and improper prescribing practices by physicians. Pharmaceuticals are also stolen by pharmacy employees and others. Doctor shopping occurs when individuals, who may or may not have a legitimate ailment, visit numerous physicians to obtain drugs in excess of what should be legitimately prescribed. Prescription forgery occurs when dealers or abusers steal prescriptions from physicians or alter the writing on prescriptions that doctors have issued. Some unscrupulous physicians prescribe medications for individuals who do not have a legitimate need for the drug at the patient's request, sometimes for a fee or for sexual favors. Legitimate prescription holders also divert portions of their prescriptions for abuse or financial gain.

2001. The report indicated that oxycodones caused 317 deaths in Florida in 2001 and were present in another 220 individuals. Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials and treatment providers report that OxyContin, once predominantly abused by lower-income, middle-age individuals, now

also is abused by middle-class individuals at an increasing rate and that the average age of abusers is decreasing.

Federal, state, and local law enforcement officials report that a 40-milligram tablet of OxyContin generally sells for \$40 in Florida. However, prices vary significantly in the state. In the Miami metropolitan area, 40-milligram tablets of OxyContin have sold for as little as \$18 to \$20. In other parts of southern Florida, some local law enforcement officials report that OxyContin prices have increased as supplies for the drug have decreased. On October 8, 2002, officials from the Port St. Lucie Police Department and the St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office reported that OxyContin abusers in their areas increasingly are substituting heroin for OxyContin in response to a decline in OxyContin availability and a corresponding increase in price. Port St. Lucie officials report that the decrease in OxyContin availability and the increase in its price resulted from the arrest of a distributor who sold significant quantities of OxyContin as well as the arrests of two area doctors who illegally prescribed OxyContin to abusers. On March 23, 2002, a Milton, Florida, doctor was sentenced to 63 years in prison for four counts of manslaughter, one count of racketeering, and five counts of unlawful delivery of a controlled substance. The controlled substances primarily included OxyContin, Lortab, and Xanax. In addition, many area doctors are hesitant to prescribe OxyContin because of its high potential for abuse.

Benzodiazepines, hydrocodones, and methadone are also commonly diverted and abused, often in combination with other drugs in Florida. Furthermore, benzodiazepine-, hydrocodone-, and methadone-related deaths appear to be increasing. Law enforcement officials and treatment professionals in the state report that crack cocaine and methamphetamine abusers occasionally abuse these prescription drugs along with oxycodones to

### **OxyContin Abusers Switching to Heroin in Many Areas of the Country**

The trend for OxyContin abusers to switch to heroin is not limited to the Port St. Lucie area. The use of heroin as a substitute for OxyContin has been reported in 12 of 20 nationwide Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) Pulse Check sites. Moreover, many law enforcement agencies in areas where OxyContin abuse is prevalent, such as Maine and western Pennsylvania, attribute recent increases in heroin abuse to users switching from OxyContin to heroin because of OxyContin's increasing cost as well as effective government efforts to control its diversion.

Source: ONDCP.

ameliorate the negative effects of these stimulants. According to the *2001 Report of Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons* by Florida Medical Examiners, there were 1,378 benzodiazepine-related deaths in the state that year—more than for any other drug except alcohol. Benzodiazepines were determined to be the cause of death in 297 of these deaths. Benzodiazepine-related deaths increased 10 percent from 661 in the first half of 2001 to 734 in the first half of 2002. The report also indicates that there were 420 hydrocodone-related deaths in 2001, with hydrocodones determined to be the cause of death in 146 of these deaths. Hydrocodone-related deaths increased 15 percent from 211 in the first half of 2001 to 248 in the first half of 2002. Additionally, there were 357 methadone-related deaths in 2001, with methadone determined to be the cause of death in 179 of these deaths. Methadone-related deaths increased 36 percent from 163 in the first half of 2001 to 254 in the first half of 2002.

Local independent Caucasian dealers are the principal wholesale and retail distributors of diverted pharmaceuticals in Florida. Retail distributors often sell diverted pharmaceuticals to acquaintances and established customers.



## Outlook

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The size and diversity of Florida's population and the wide array of transportation options make the state an ideal location for the transportation, distribution, and abuse of illicit drugs. These factors, coupled with the state's proximity to drug source and transit countries, international banks, and offshore banking centers ensure that DTOs and criminal groups will continue to exploit Florida's infrastructure to facilitate their drug trafficking and money laundering activities. Colombian, Russian, Israeli, and Western European DTOs and criminal groups; Mexican and Jamaican criminal groups; and local independent Caucasian dealers will likely continue to dominate the wholesale distribution of drugs in Florida.

The distribution and abuse of powdered and crack cocaine will continue to be a significant illicit drug threat to Florida. Violence will continue to be associated with crack distribution in Florida, particularly in inner-city neighborhoods and low-income housing projects. Colombian DTOs and criminal groups will maintain control of the supply of cocaine to and within Florida; however, various other DTOs and criminal groups, often working on their behalf, will likely distribute increasing quantities of cocaine in the state.

The distribution and abuse of heroin will continue to pose a threat. Miami and Orlando will remain primary transportation hubs and distribution centers for South American heroin. Most of the heroin available in Florida will continue to originate in South America; however, the availability of heroin produced in Mexico may increase as distributors attempt to increase their market share. Colombian DTOs and criminal groups likely will remain the primary wholesale distributors of South American heroin in Florida.

The production, availability, and abuse of methamphetamine will likely increase in Florida, particularly in the northern and panhandle areas. Most of the methamphetamine available in Florida will continue to be produced in high volume laboratories in Mexico, California, and southwestern states. However, the availability of

locally produced methamphetamine, particularly in the northern areas of the state where law enforcement officials report an increasing number of laboratory seizures, will continue to increase. Crystal methamphetamine will become increasingly popular among nightclub attendees in the larger metropolitan areas.

Marijuana will continue to be the most widely available and abused illicit drug in Florida. Significant quantities of marijuana are produced in Florida; however, most of the marijuana available in the state will continue to be produced in Jamaica or Mexico. Mexican and Jamaican criminal groups—with their established transportation and distribution networks—will remain dominant marijuana transporters and distributors; however, various other criminal groups and independent dealers will continue to transport and distribute the drug in Florida.

MDMA will remain readily available and commonly abused, particularly in or near large metropolitan areas. It is likely that the availability of MDMA in smaller cities and towns throughout the state will increase even more. Miami will continue to serve as a regional distribution center for wholesale quantities of MDMA. Israeli and Russian DTOs and criminal groups have dominated the transportation of MDMA into Florida, and there are no indications that this will change; however, Caribbean and Colombian criminal groups will likely become more involved in transporting MDMA into Florida. Colombian criminal groups also may increase their involvement in wholesale MDMA distribution. Although MDMA primarily is distributed at raves or techno parties, private parties, nightclubs, and on high school and college campuses, it is likely that distribution will expand to open-air markets and other venues in which the other major illicit drugs also are available. According to Florida treatment providers, as MDMA abuse becomes more widespread in Florida, some users will seek new ways of administering the drug, possibly by snorting or injecting.

Other dangerous drugs such as GHB, LSD, ketamine, and diverted pharmaceuticals generally are available and abused to a lesser extent than most other illicit drugs in Florida. However, most federal, state, and local law enforcement officials report that the rate of abuse of these drugs, particularly diverted pharmaceuticals, is increasing more rapidly than for any other drug, and it is likely that this trend will continue. However, the abuse of OxyContin will likely decrease as the

drug's availability decreases and its price increases. For example, in Port St. Lucie the cost of a diverted 80-milligram OxyContin tablet has increased from a range of \$35 to \$50 to approximately \$50 to \$80. By comparison, heroin can be purchased for \$10 per dosage unit. As a result, abusers will seek alternate drugs such as methadone and heroin.

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## *Sources*

### **State and Regional**

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Act II Counseling Inc.

Addiction Recovery Center

Another Chance Counseling Center

Bay County Sheriff's Office

Better Way of Miami Inc.

Bridges of America

Polk Bridge

Broward County Commission

Human Services Department

Substance Abuse and Health Care Services Division

Fort Lauderdale

Broward County Sheriff's Office

Broward Treatment Center

Central Florida Treatment Centers

City/County Investigative Bureau

Sanford/Seminole County

City of Miami Police Department

City of Orlando Fire Department

Emergency Medical Services Division

City of Orlando Police Department

Colonial Management Group LP

Comprehensive Psychiatric Center

Daytona Beach Police Department

Duval County Sheriff's Office

Escambia County Sheriff's Office

**Florida Drug Threat Assessment**

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Gadsden County Sheriff's Office  
Gateway Community Services, Inc.  
Gulf Coast County Sheriff's Office  
Here's Help  
Highland County Sheriff's Office  
Hillsborough County Sheriff's Office  
Holistic Addiction Treatment Program, Inc.  
House of Hope & Stepping Stones  
Hyde Park Counseling Center  
Indian River County Sheriff's Office  
Jacksonville County Sheriff's Office  
Jacksonville Metro Treatment Center  
Jacksonville Police Department  
James A. Haley Veterans Hospital  
    Alcohol and Drug Abuse Treatment Program  
Jefferson County Sheriff's Office  
La Belle Police Department  
Lakeland Centers  
Lee County Emergency Management Agency  
Lee County Sheriff's Office  
Leon County Sheriff's Office  
Levy County Sheriff's Office  
Lifeskills of Boca Raton  
Marion Citrus Mental Health Center Inc.  
Martin County Sheriff's Office  
Melbourne Police Department  
Metropolitan Bureau of Investigation  
    Ninth Judicial Circuit  
    Orange and Osceola Counties

Miami-Dade Medical Examiner Department

Toxicology Laboratory

Miami-Dade Police Department

Miami Police Department

Monticello Police Department

New Smyrna Beach Police Department

North Miami Beach Police Department

Ocala Police Department

Operation PAR

Orange City Police Department

Orange County Sheriff's Office

Osceola County Sheriff's Office

Pasco County Sheriff's Office

Phoenix House

Pinellas County Sheriff's Office

Polk County Health Department

Polk County Sheriff's Office

Bureau of Criminal Investigations

Ponce Inlet Police Department

Port St. Lucie Police Department

*Port St. Lucie Tribune*

River Region Human Services, Inc.

Sanford Police Department

Sarasota County Sheriff's Office

Seminole County Sheriff's Office

Shelbourne House

Southwest Miami Treatment Center

St. Lucie County Sheriff's Office

Florida Drug Threat Assessment

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State of Florida

- Department of Agriculture
  - Office of Inspector General
- Department of Children and Families
  - Division of Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health
- Department of Corrections
- Department of Law Enforcement
  - Domestic Marijuana Eradication Program
- Drug Court Programs Office
- Fourth Judicial Circuit Drug Courts
- Highway Patrol
  - Contraband Interdiction Unit
- Medical Examiners Commission
- Office of Drug Control

Suwannee County Sheriff's Office

Tallahassee Police Department

Tampa Metro Treatment Center

Tampa Police Department

The Center for Drug Free Living

The Starting Place

The Village

University of Miami School of Medicine

- Florida Poison Information Center

Up Front Drug Information Center

Vero Beach Police Department

Volusia County Sheriff's Office

West Palm Beach Police Department

Zephyrhills Police Department

**National**

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Executive Office of the President

- Office of National Drug Control Policy
  - High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area

- Central Florida
- New York/New Jersey
- North Florida
- South Florida

U.S. Department of Commerce

- U.S. Census Bureau

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

- Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
  - Youth Risk Behavior Survey
- National Institutes of Health
  - National Institute on Drug Abuse
- Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
  - Office of Applied Studies
    - Drug Abuse Warning Network
    - National Household Survey on Drug Abuse
    - Treatment Episode Data Set

U.S. Department of Homeland Security

- U.S. Coast Guard
  - District Seven Maritime Intelligence Center
- U.S. Customs Service
  - Blue Lightning Strike Force

U.S. Department of Justice

- Bureau of Justice Statistics
- Drug Enforcement Administration
  - Central Florida Methamphetamine Task Force/DEA–Task Force Two/Tampa
  - Domestic Cannabis Eradication/Suppression Program
  - El Paso Intelligence Center
    - Operation Jetway
    - Operation Pipeline
  - Federal-wide Drug Seizure System
  - Miami Division
    - Ft. Lauderdale District Office
    - Gainesville Resident Office
    - Jacksonville Resident Office
    - Key West Post of Duty
    - Orlando Resident Office
    - Panama City Resident Office
    - Pensacola Resident Office



Florida Drug Threat Assessment

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Tallahassee Resident Office  
Tampa District Office  
West Palm Beach Resident Office

Orlando Heroin Task Force  
Southeast Regional Laboratory  
System to Retrieve Information from Drug Evidence  
Washington Division

National Institute of Justice  
Office of Justice Programs  
Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring Program  
U.S. Attorney's Office  
Middle District of Florida  
Northern District of Florida  
Southern District of Florida

U.S. Sentencing Commission

**Other**

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*Associated Press*

Bell, Vaughn, *Ketamine ('K', Special K, Vitamin K)*, 1995

Columbia University  
National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse

Marnell, Tim, *Drug Identification Bible*, 4th ed., 1999

McDermott, Peter, *Ketamine: Trick or Treat*, 1992

Middle Atlantic–Great Lakes Organized Crime Law Enforcement Network (MAGLOCLLEN)

State of Georgia  
Governor's Task Force

State of New Mexico  
State Police

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