

Stimulants: Recent Trends and Prevention Resources

Catching Up With COSSAP, August 2020

The use of illicit stimulants and the misuse of prescription stimulants present a daunting public health challenge to communities across the United States. This article provides an overview of recent stimulant use disorder and overdose trends, discusses prevention strategies and programs that focus on stimulant drugs, and identifies resources that COSSAP grantees can use to increase their understanding of stimulants and to select an appropriate prevention approach for their community. For the purposes of this article, stimulants are defined as cocaine and psychostimulants with misuse potential, such as prescription stimulants, methamphetamine, and MDMA. MDMA, more commonly known as ecstasy or molly, acts as both a stimulant and hallucinogen.

Stimulant Use Disorders

In 2018, 1.05 million Americans experienced methamphetamine use disorder during the previous year; 977,000 people had cocaine use disorder (including crack); and 561,000 people had a prescription stimulant use disorder (prescription stimulants include drugs such as Adderall, Dexedrine, Ritalin, and Concerta). In 2018, about 2.5 million people had used MDMA in the previous year.¹

Stimulant-Involved Overdose Deaths

From 2009 through 2018, the rate of cocaine-involved drug overdose deaths more than tripled, from 1.4 to 4.5 per 100,000 people, and the rate of drug overdose deaths involving psychostimulants with misuse potential (mostly methamphetamine) increased almost eightfold, from 0.5 to 3.9 per 100,000 people.^{2,3,4}

Regional Trends

Surveillance data show regional differences in stimulant-involved overdose trends.^{5,6} In the Northeast, the increase in cocaine-involved overdose deaths has been driven by the involvement of synthetic narcotics such as illicitly manufactured fentanyl and its analogs. More information is needed on the extent to which these overdoses are the result of inadvertent contamination or polysubstance use.⁷

In the West, the increase in psychostimulant-involved overdose deaths has primarily occurred independent of synthetic narcotics. This is consistent with law enforcement reports that methamphetamine has become more prevalent.⁸

Figures 1–4 present cocaine and psychostimulant overdose death trends by census region, overall and including the involvement of opioids.

Stimulants: Recent Trends and Prevention Resources

Catching Up With COSSAP, August 2020

Figure 1. Northeast (Census Region 1)

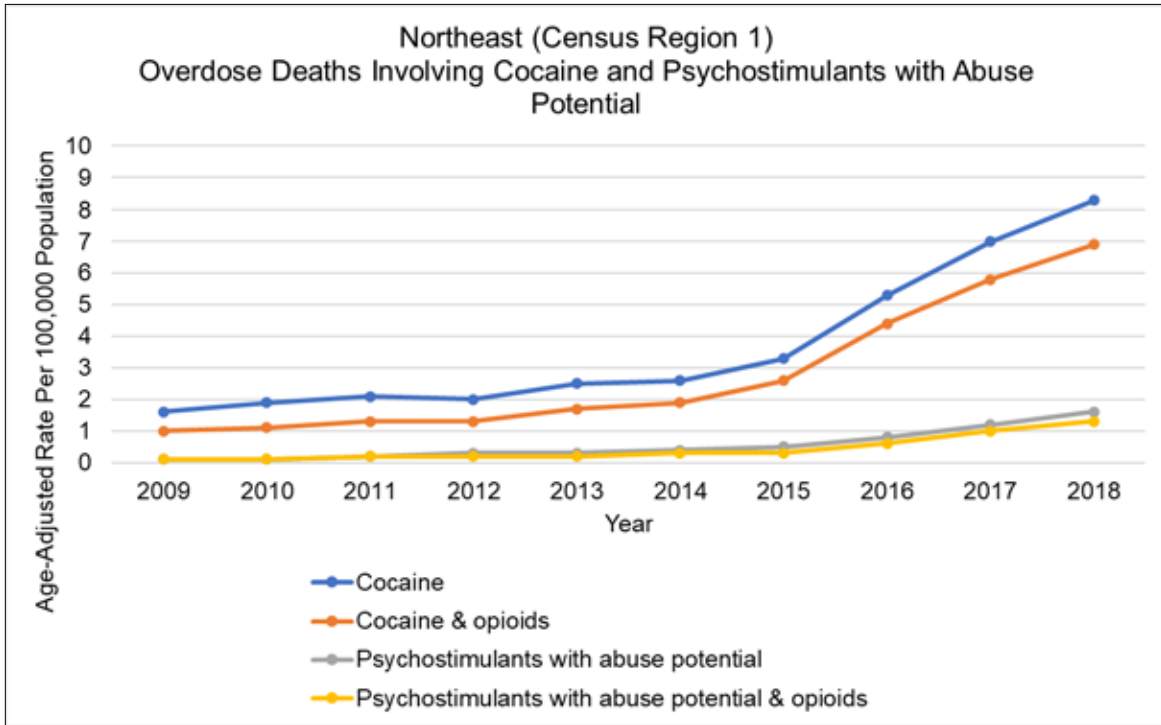
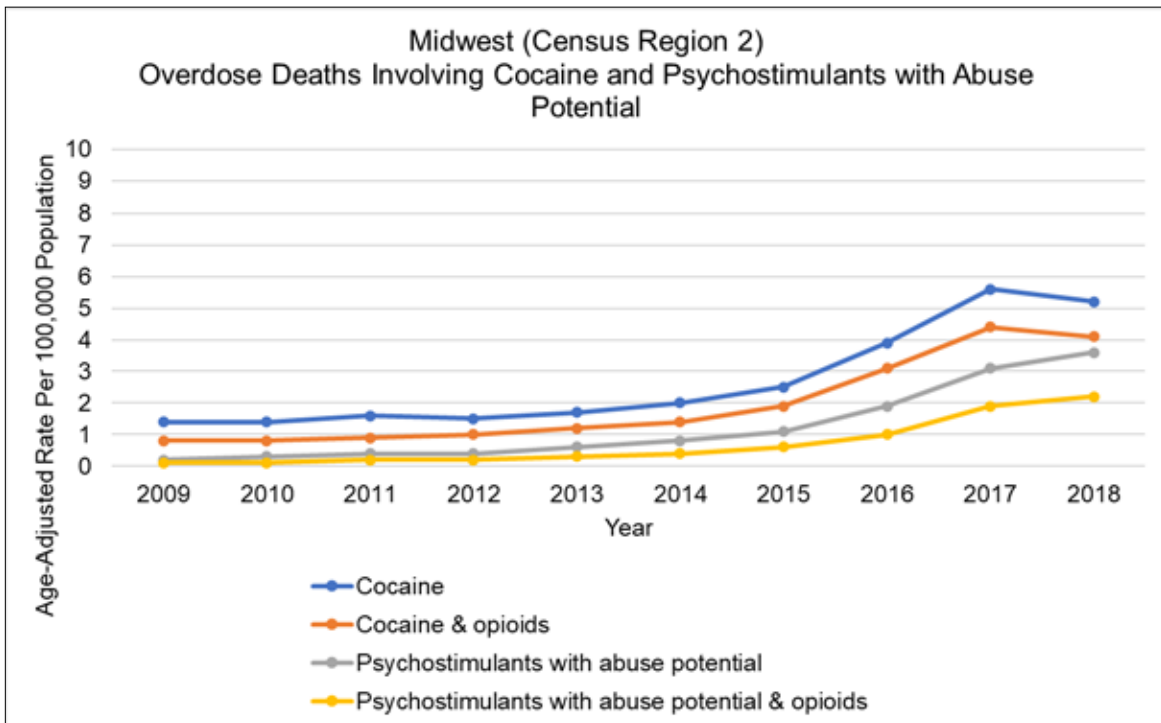


Figure 2. Midwest (Census Region 2)



Stimulants: Recent Trends and Prevention Resources

Catching Up With COSSAP, August 2020

Figure 3. South (Census Region 3)

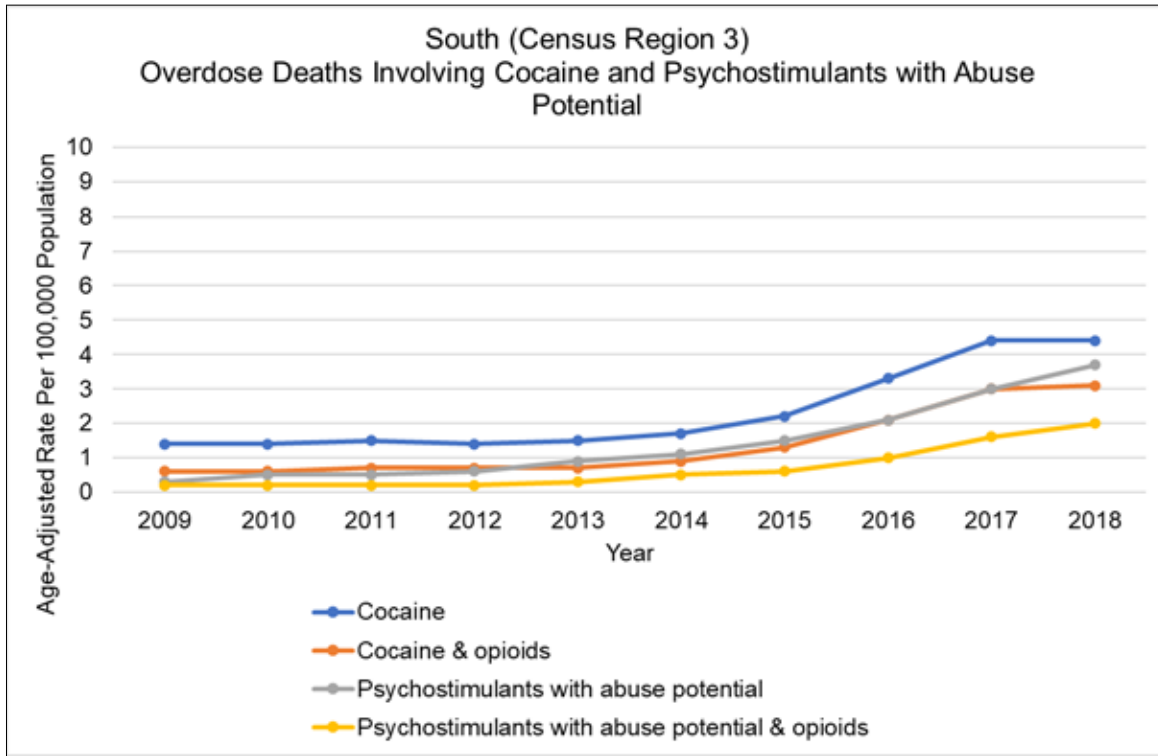
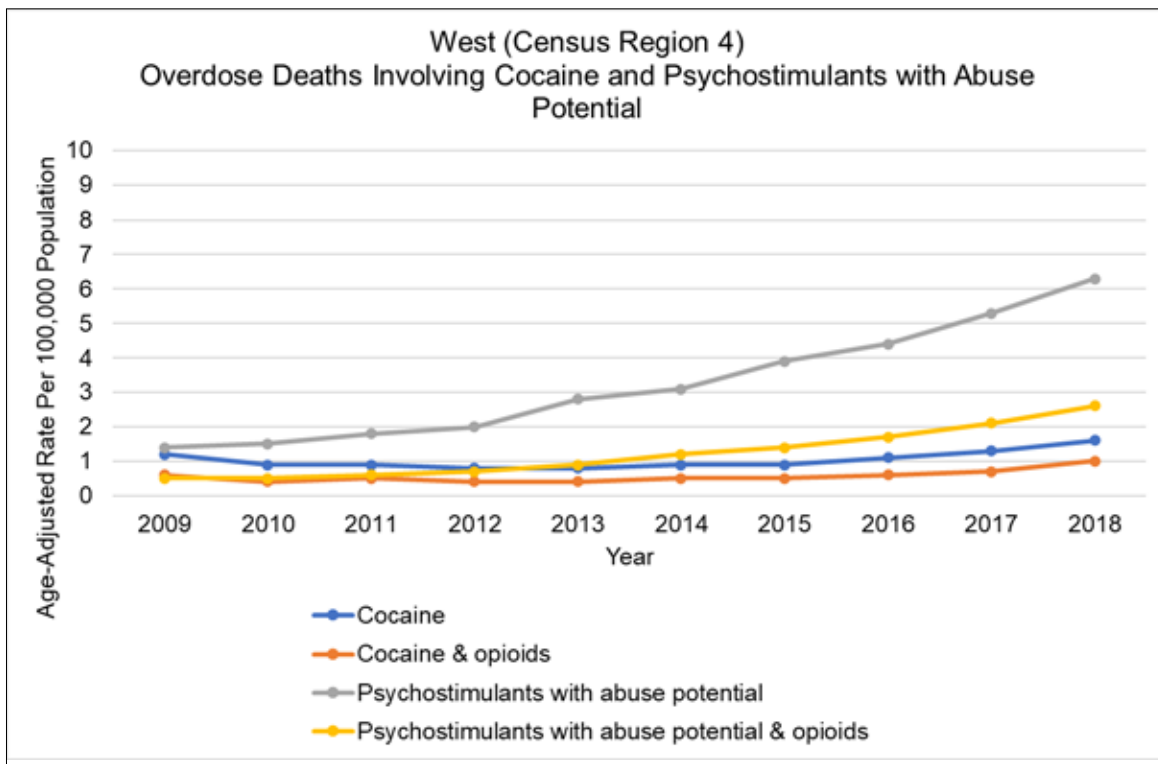


Figure 4. West (Census Region 4)



Stimulants: Recent Trends and Prevention Resources

Catching Up With COSSAP, August 2020

Prevention Strategies

Because stimulant-involved overdose deaths are on the rise, both with and without the involvement of fentanyl, communities need to implement strategies that focus on the prevention of both stimulant use disorders and overdose deaths. Although information is available on effective overdose strategies, such as the provision of fentanyl test strips and overdose education and naloxone distribution in jails and prisons, few studies in the United States have reported on programs or policies that can prevent misuse of or addiction to specific stimulant drugs.^{9,10,11}

For youths aged 10 to 17, the following programs seem to be effective in reducing methamphetamine or amphetamine use at follow-up.¹²

- [LifeSkills Training](#)
- [Strengthening Families Program: For Parents and Youth 10-14](#)
- [PROmoting School-community-university Partnerships to Enhance Resilience \(PROSPER\)](#)
- [Project Star \(Midwestern Prevention Project\)](#)

Less information is available on effective programs for individuals aged 18 and older. To advance the field further, communities should seek out opportunities to evaluate and publish findings on their stimulant prevention initiatives. For those considering implementing a new program, the next section provides helpful resources on stimulants and best practices in preventing the abuse of them.

Recommended Resources

Click on the publication title or icon to link to each resource.

STIMULANTS	
	Drugs of Abuse: A DEA Resource Guide, 2020 Edition Published by the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in 2020.
	Drug Topics Online resource updated by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) on an ongoing basis.
	Treatment of Stimulant Use Disorders Published by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) in 2020.
PREVENTION—STIMULANTS	
	Increasing Overdose Deaths Related to Cocaine and Other Stimulants: Guidance from the New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports, Medical Advisory Panel Published by the New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports, Medical Advisory Panel in 2020.

Stimulants: Recent Trends and Prevention Resources

Catching Up With COSSAP, August 2020

PREVENTION—STIMULANTS (continued)



[Stimulant Medication Misuse Prevention Peer Education Toolkit](#)

Published by the Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education in 2018.



[Prevention of Prescription Stimulant Misuse among Youth](#)

Published by the Canadian Centre on Substance Abuse in 2016.



[Preventing Amphetamine-Type Stimulant Use Among Young People: A Policy and Programming Guide](#)

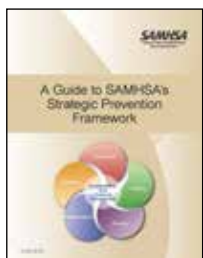
Published by the United Nations Office on Drugs And Crime in 2007.

PREVENTION—GENERAL



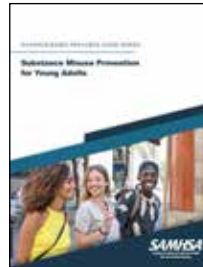
[Prevention With Purpose: A Strategic Planning Guide For Preventing Drug Misuse Among College Students](#)

Published by the DEA in 2020.



[A Guide to SAMHSA's Strategic Prevention Framework](#)

Published by SAMHSA in 2019.



[Substance Misuse Prevention for Young Adults](#)

Published by SAMHSA in 2019.



[A Primer for Implementation of Overdose Education and Naloxone Distribution in Jails and Prisons](#)

Published by RTI International in 2019.



[Focus On Prevention: Strategies and Programs to Prevent Substance Use](#)

Published by SAMHSA in 2017.



[Preventing Drug Use among Children and Adolescents: A Research-Based Guide for Parents, Educators, and Community Leaders, Second Edition](#)

Published by NIDA in 2003.



[Guide to Developing and Managing Overdose Prevention and Take-Home Naloxone Projects](#)

Published by the Harm Reduction Coalition in 2012.

Stimulants: Recent Trends and Prevention Resources

Catching Up With COSSAP, August 2020

References

¹Hedegaard, H., Miniño, A. M., & Warner, M. (2020). *Drug overdose deaths in the United States, 1999–2018*. (NCHS Data Brief, no 356). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/databriefs/db356-h.pdf>.

²Ibid.

³Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Center for Health Statistics. (2020). *Multiple Cause of Death 1999–2018 on CDC WONDER Online Database*, released in 2020 [Data set]. (Multiple Cause of Death Files, 1999–2018, as compiled from data provided by the 57 vital statistics jurisdictions through the Vital Statistics Cooperative Program). <http://wonder.cdc.gov/mcd-icd10.html>.

⁴Kariisa, M., Scholl, L., Wilson, N., Seth, P., & Hoots, B. (2019). Drug overdose deaths involving cocaine and psychostimulants with abuse potential—United States, 2003–2017. *Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report*, 68(17), 388–395. <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6817a3>.

⁵Ibid.

⁶Hedegaard, H., Bastian, B. A., Trinidad, J. P., Spencer, M. R., & Warner, M. (2019). Regional differences in the drugs most frequently involved in drug overdose deaths: United States, 2017. *National Vital Statistics Reports*, 68(12). https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nvsr/nvsr68/nvsr68_12-508.pdf.

⁷U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration. (2019). *National Drug Threat Assessment 8* (Report No. DEA-DCT-DIR-007-20). U.S. Department of Justice. https://www.dea.gov/sites/default/files/2020-01/2019-NDTA-final-01-14-2020_Low_Web-Dir-007-20_2019.pdf.

⁸New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports. (2020). Increasing overdose deaths related to cocaine and other stimulants: Guidance from the New York State Office of Addiction Services and Supports, Medical Advisory Panel. <https://oasas.ny.gov/system/files/documents/2020/02/cocaine-stimulant-guidance.pdf>.

⁹Ibid.

¹⁰Wheeler, E., Burk, K., McQuie, H., & Standliff, S. (2012). *Guide to Developing and Managing Overdose Prevention and Take-Home Naloxone Projects*. Harm Reduction Coalition. <https://harmreduction.org/issue-area/overdose-prevention-issue-area/od-manual/>.

¹¹Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2018). *Opioid Overdose Prevention Toolkit*. (Publication No. SMA18-4742). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://store.samhsa.gov/product/Opioid-Overdose-Prevention-Toolkit/SMA18-4742>.

¹²Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (2019). *Substance Misuse Prevention for Young Adults* (Publication No. PEP19-PL-Guide-1). U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. <https://store.samhsa.gov/sites/default/files/d7/priv/pep19-pl-guide-1.pdf>.

Visit the COSSAP Resource Center at www.cossapresources.org.

