

Iowa Drug Trends

Susie Sher, Bureau Chief

Iowa Department of Public Safety

Office of Drug Control Policy





- Susie Sher, Bureau Chief
- ODCP is the SAA for Iowa
- Drug policy and federal grants
- Charged with coordinating substance use prevention, treatment, and enforcement efforts in Iowa
- OF NOTE: CJJP moved to ODCP!

What drug are
Iowans using?



ALCOHOL



MARIJUANA



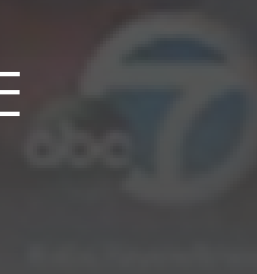
METH IS
KING



PILLS



COCAINE
AND MORE



Intentional Exposure Calls to Poison Control

Intentional Exposure

- Substance Abuse
- Substance Misuse
- Suspected suicide
- Unknown

Type of Substance

- **217** Non-Pharmaceutical (alcohol, cleaning products, hygiene products)
- **865** Pharmaceutical (OTC medicines, prescription drugs)

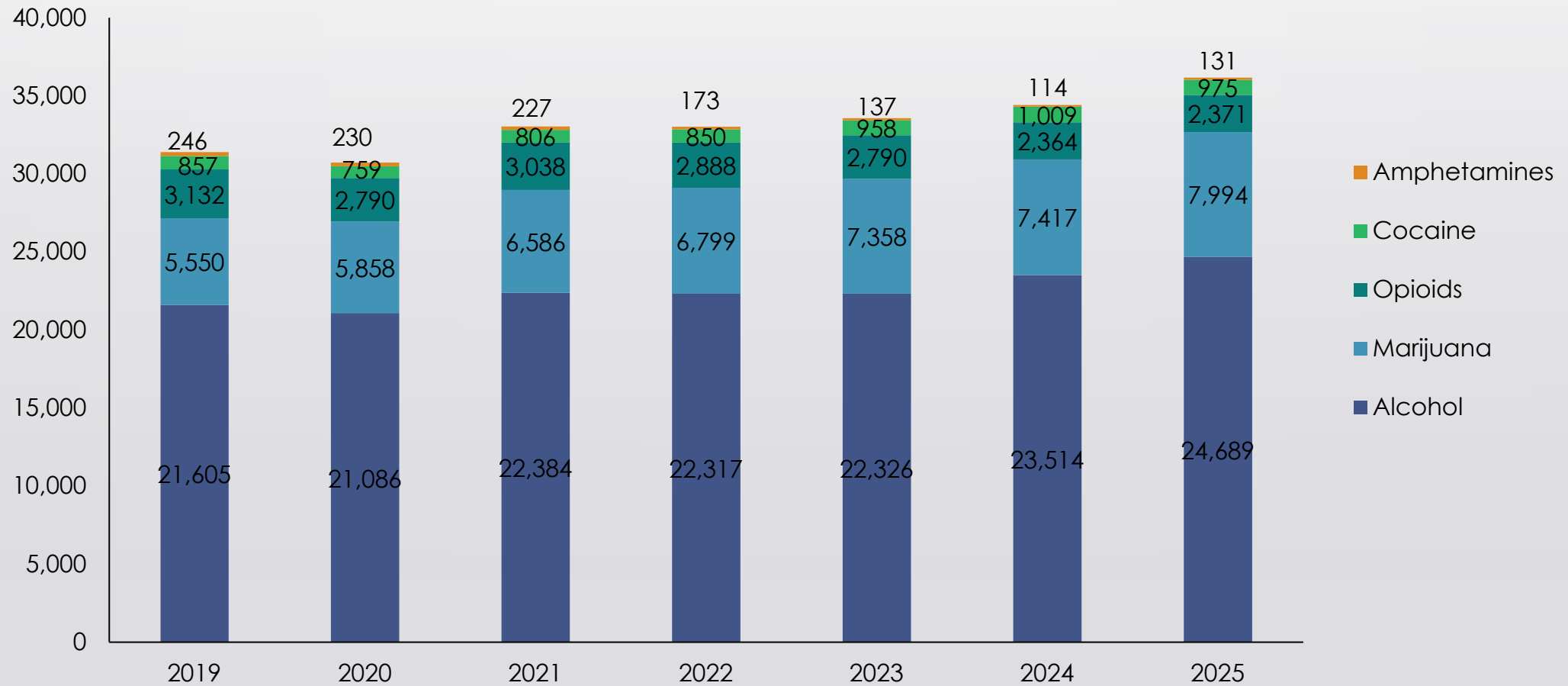
Age Range

- **345** age 6 to 19
- **737** age 20 or older

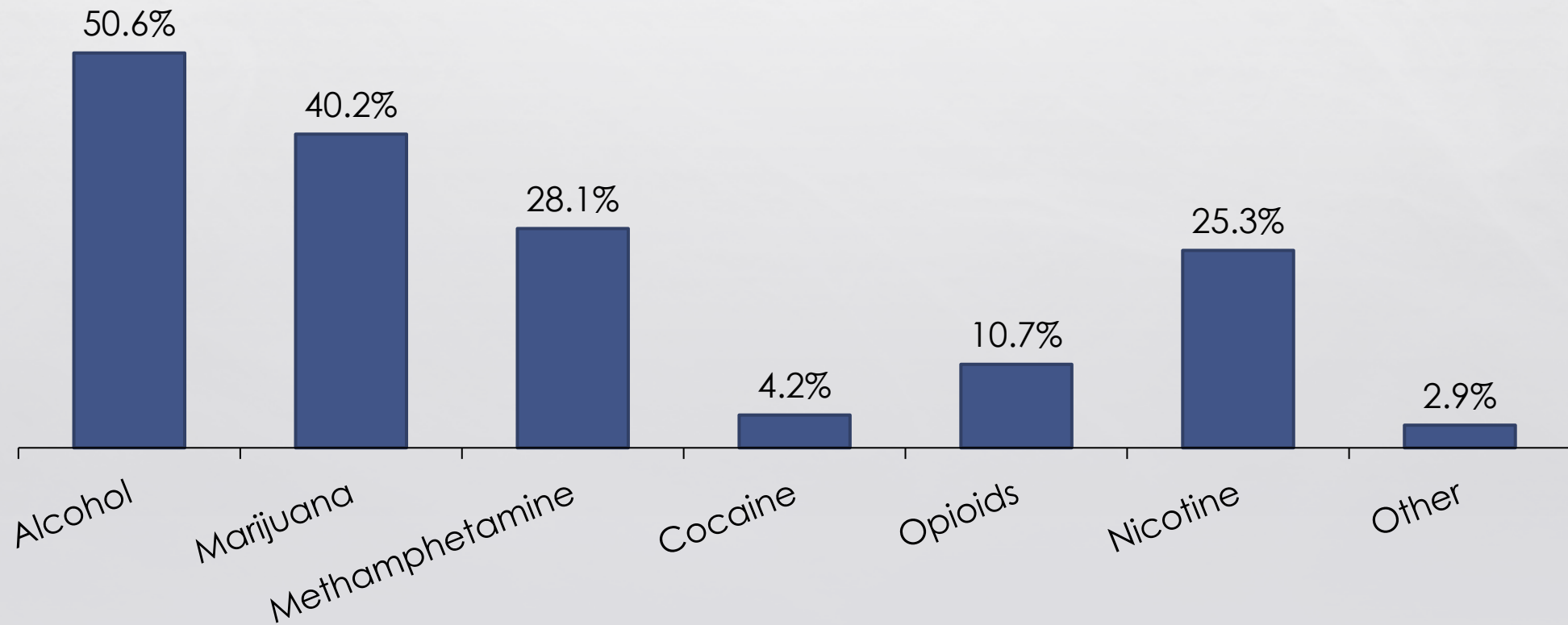
Normalization of Drug & Alcohol Use

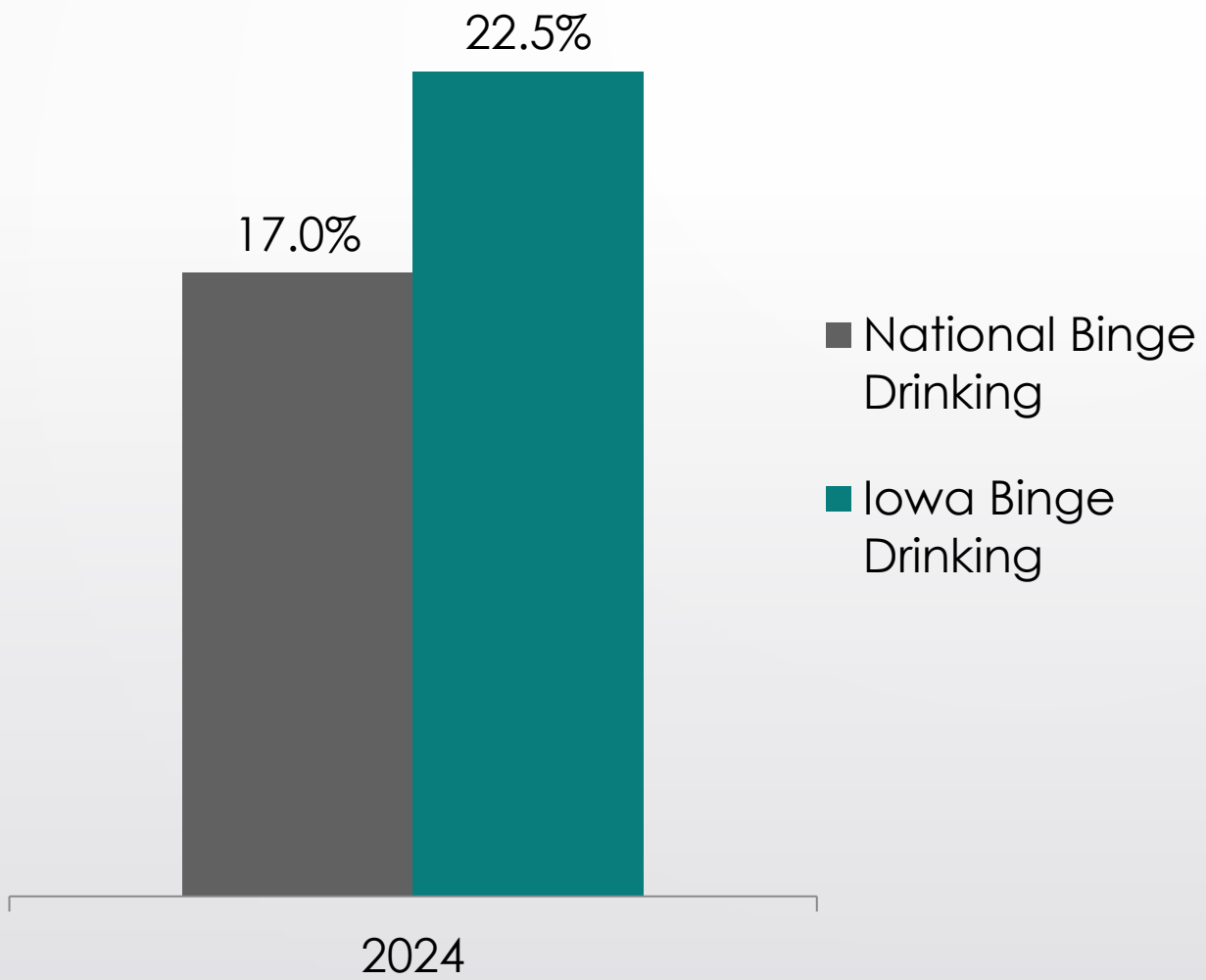


Iowa Drug and Alcohol-Related ED Visits

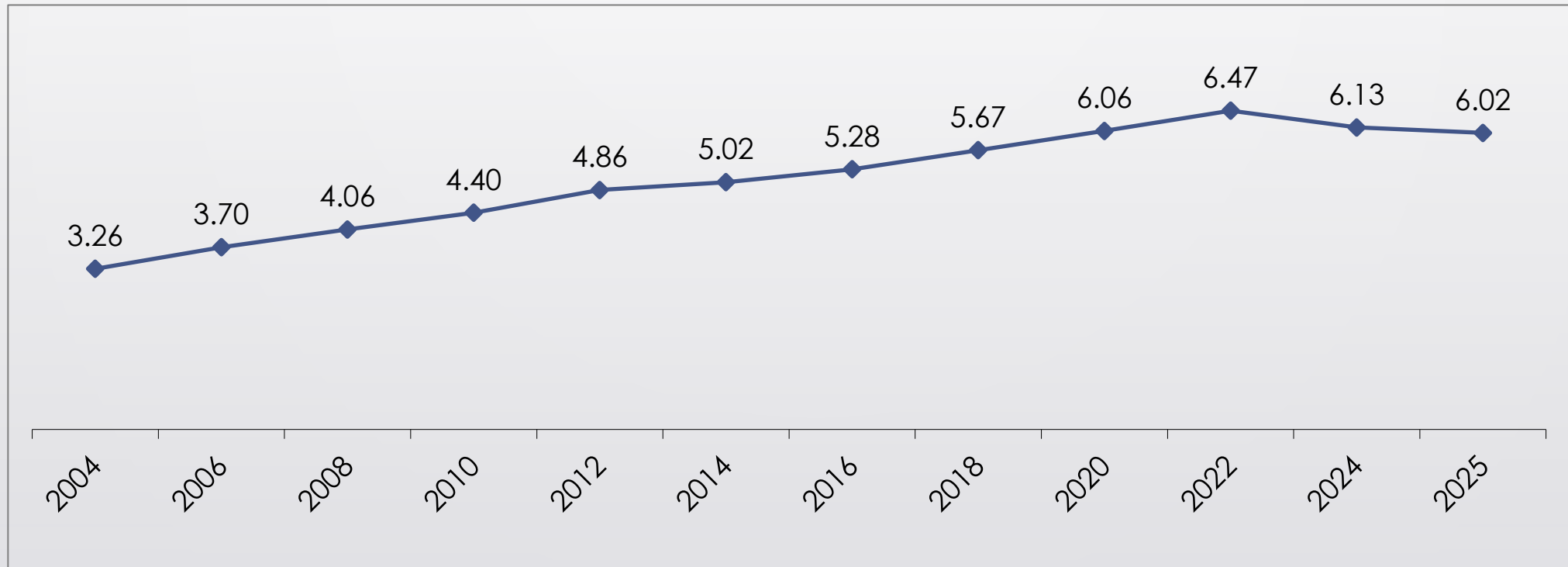


Past 30-Day Substance Use by Iowa Adult & Juvenile Clients Admitted to SUD Treatment



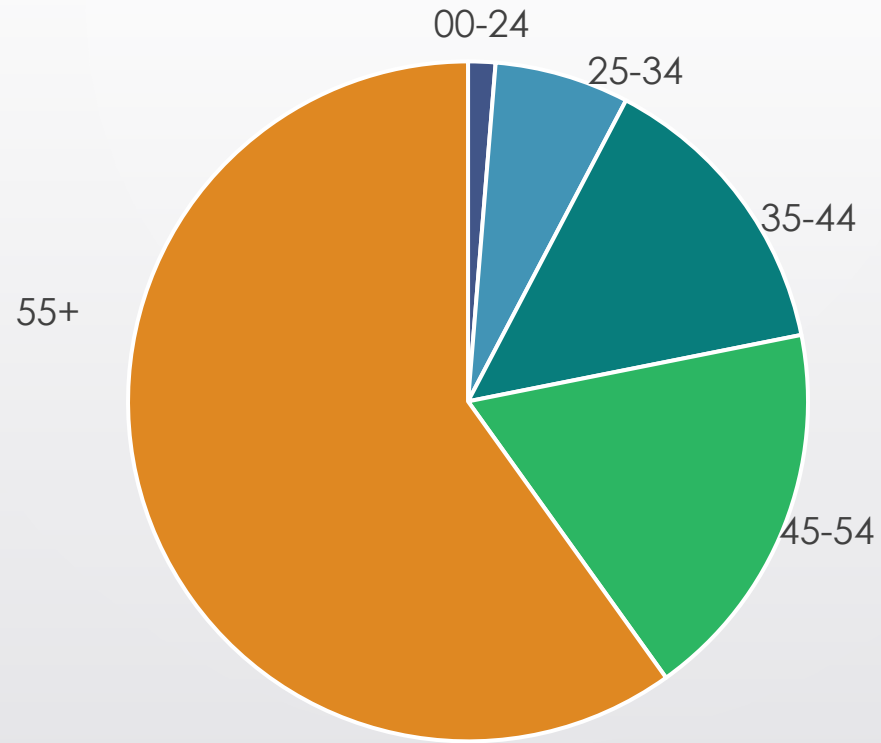


Iowa Distilled Spirits Sales (gallons in millions)



Iowa Alcohol-Related Deaths

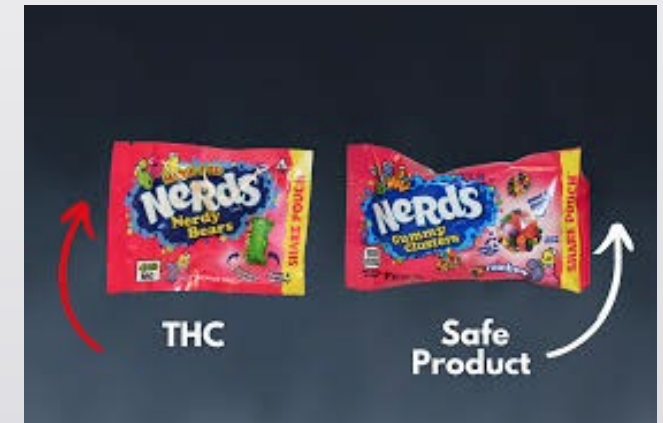




Alcohol-Related Deaths by Age Group

“Consumable Hemp” and Marijuana

- Consumable hemp is still marijuana and contains THC (Legalized edibles)
- July 1, 2024, law now prohibits the sale of consumable hemp to individuals under 21
- There are >1,000 active registrants in Iowa, including many bars and restaurants
- Maximum total THC limits for consumable hemp products is now 4 mg/serving and 10 mg/container



Medical Marijuana

Iowa patients or caregivers may possess these THC-containing cannabis (marijuana) products:

Vaporizable

Oral forms - tablets, capsules, liquids,
tinctures, and sublingual forms

Topical forms - gels, ointments, creams,
lotions, and transdermal patches



There is a “4.5g THC per 90-day” purchase limit for Iowa’s program, but this is enforced at the point of sale at dispensaries. Medical waivers may also be in place. (=50mg per day)



THC will show up on a drug test up to 90 days after consumption

641—154.13(124E) Allowable forms of medical cannabidiol.

154.13(1) *Modification of allowable forms.* Allowable forms of medical cannabidiol may be modified by approval of a recommendation by the medical cannabidiol board, subsequent approval of the board of medicine, and adoption of the recommendations by the department.

154.13(2) *Allowable forms.*

a. A manufacturer may only manufacture medical cannabidiol in the following forms:

(1) Oral forms, including but not limited to:

1. Tablet.
2. Capsule.
3. Liquid.
4. Tincture.
5. Sublingual.

(2) Topical forms, including but not limited to:

1. Gel.
2. Ointment, cream or lotion.
3. Transdermal patch.

(3) Inhaled forms, limited to:

1. Nebulizable.
2. Vaporizable.

(4) Rectal/vaginal forms, including but not limited to suppository.

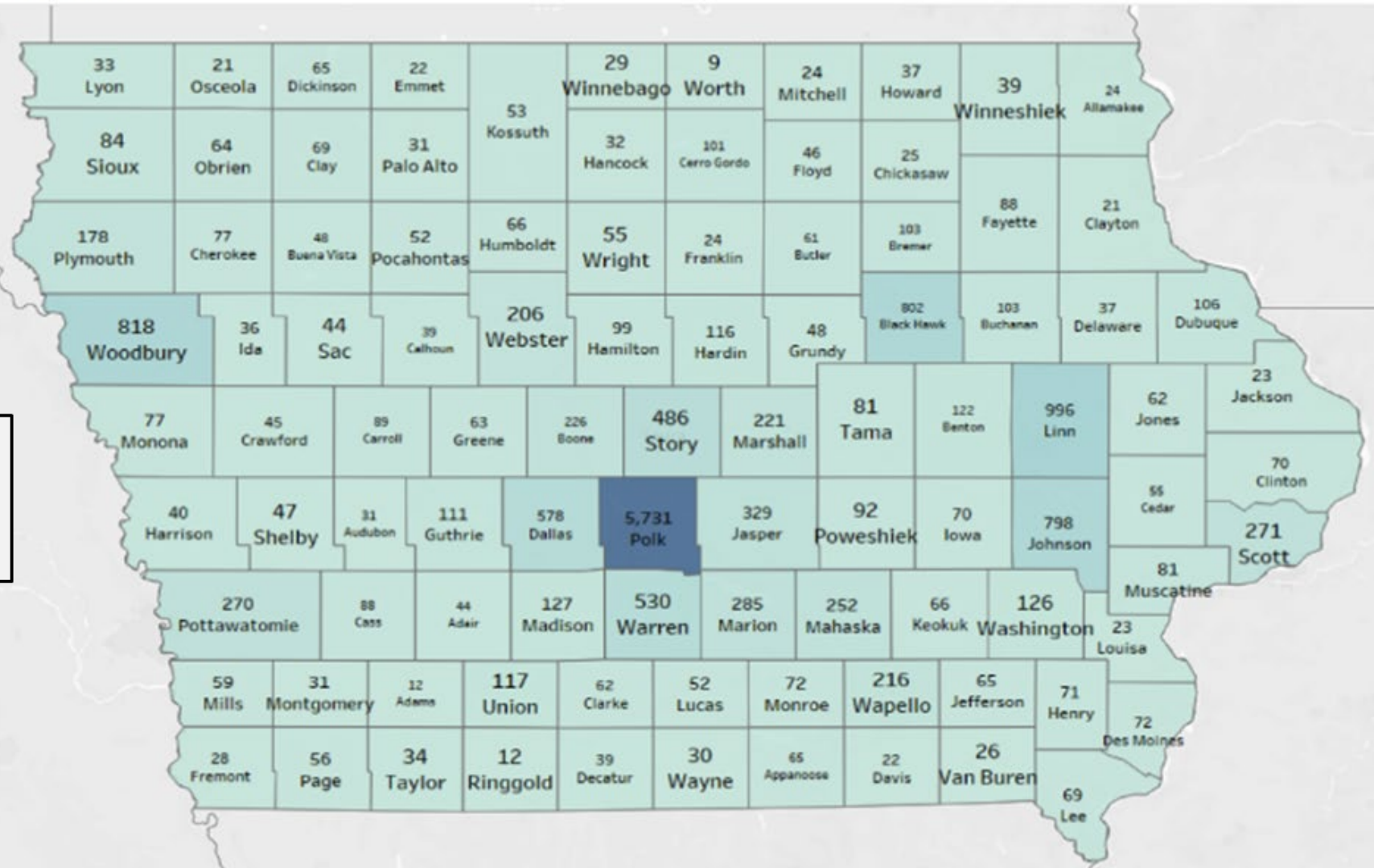
b. A manufacturer shall not produce medical cannabidiol in any form that may be smoked.

c. A manufacturer shall not produce edible medical cannabidiol products.

[ARC 8124C, IAB 7/10/24, effective 8/14/24]

Medical Marijuana

Active Patients by County



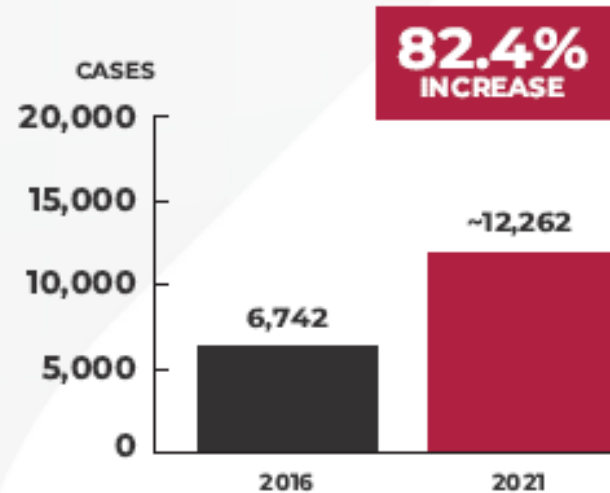
Youth 12-20 were more likely to become cannabis users in legal marijuana states vs. others.

University of California-San Diego, 2022

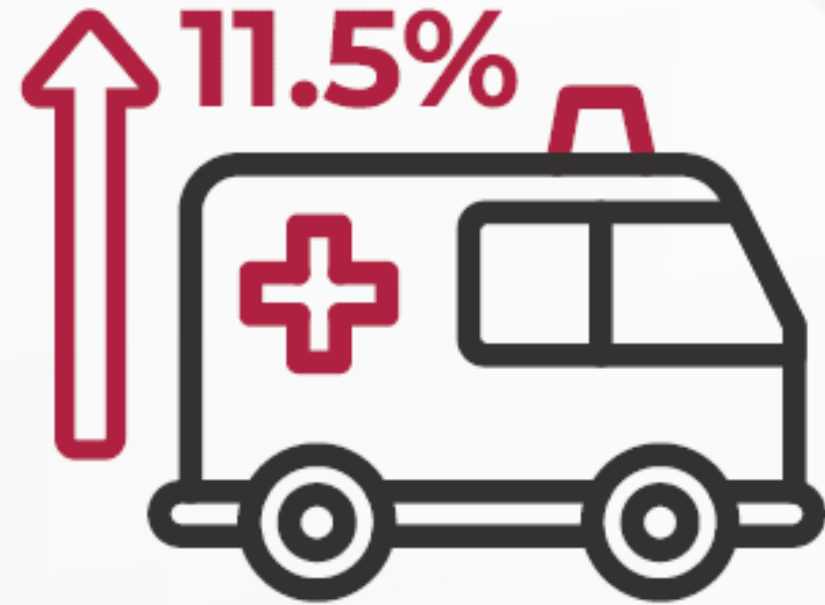
14 of 15 states with highest 12+ past month usage legalized marijuana.

NSDUH/NCSL, 2020/2022

Smart Approaches to Marijuana (SAM)



Marijuana-related pediatric emergency visits increased by 82.4% (2016–2021).



Marijuana-related emergency department visits increased 11.5% from 2021 to 2023.

Iowa Marijuana-Related ED Visits





JAMA Health Forum

Study of over 400,000 youth age 13 to 17

By age 26

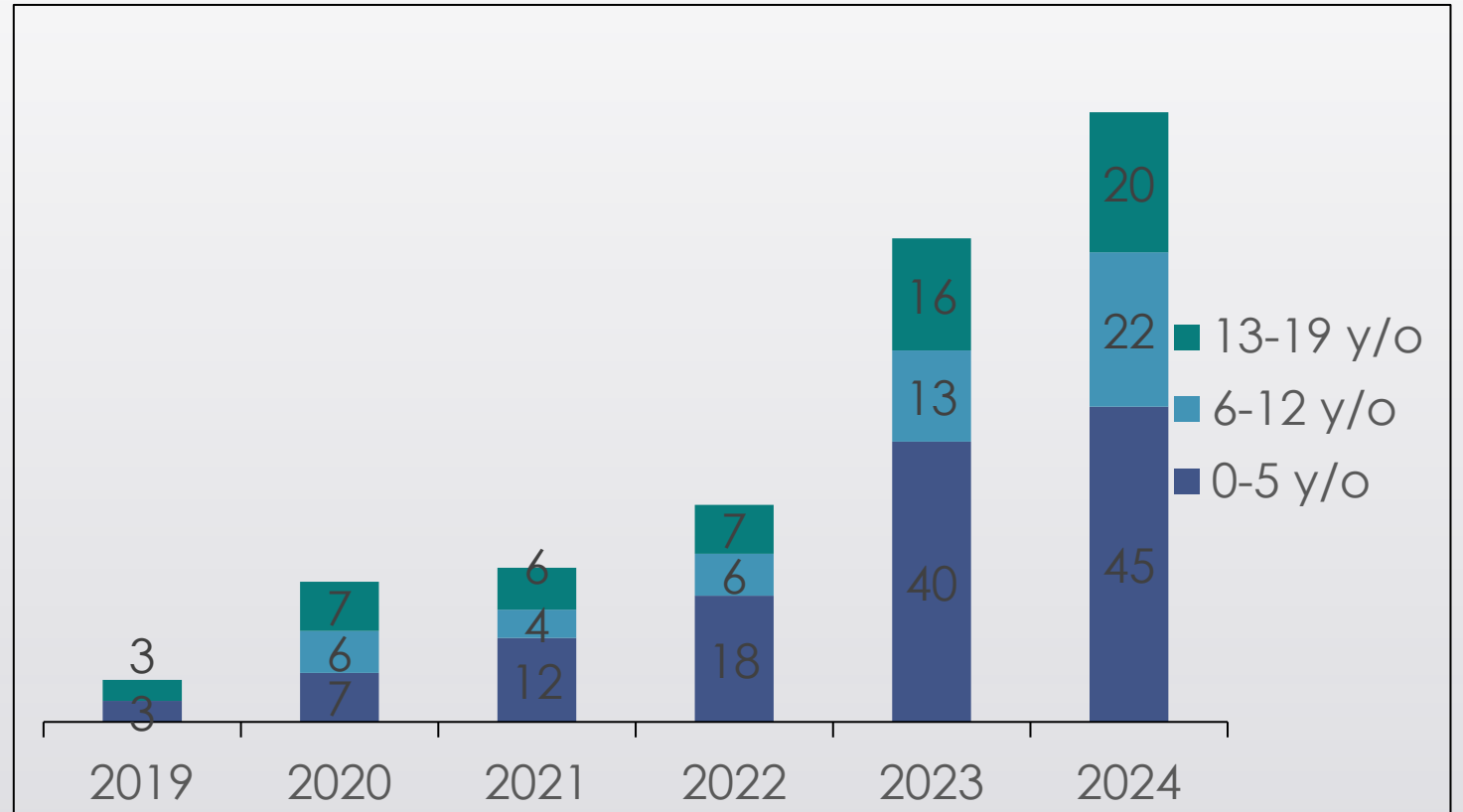
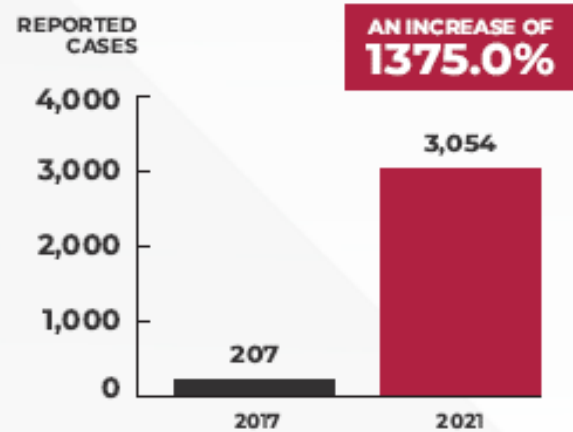
Cannabis use was associated with a greater risk of:

- Twice the risk of bipolar or psychotic disorders
- 34% higher risk of depression
- 24% higher risk of anxiety

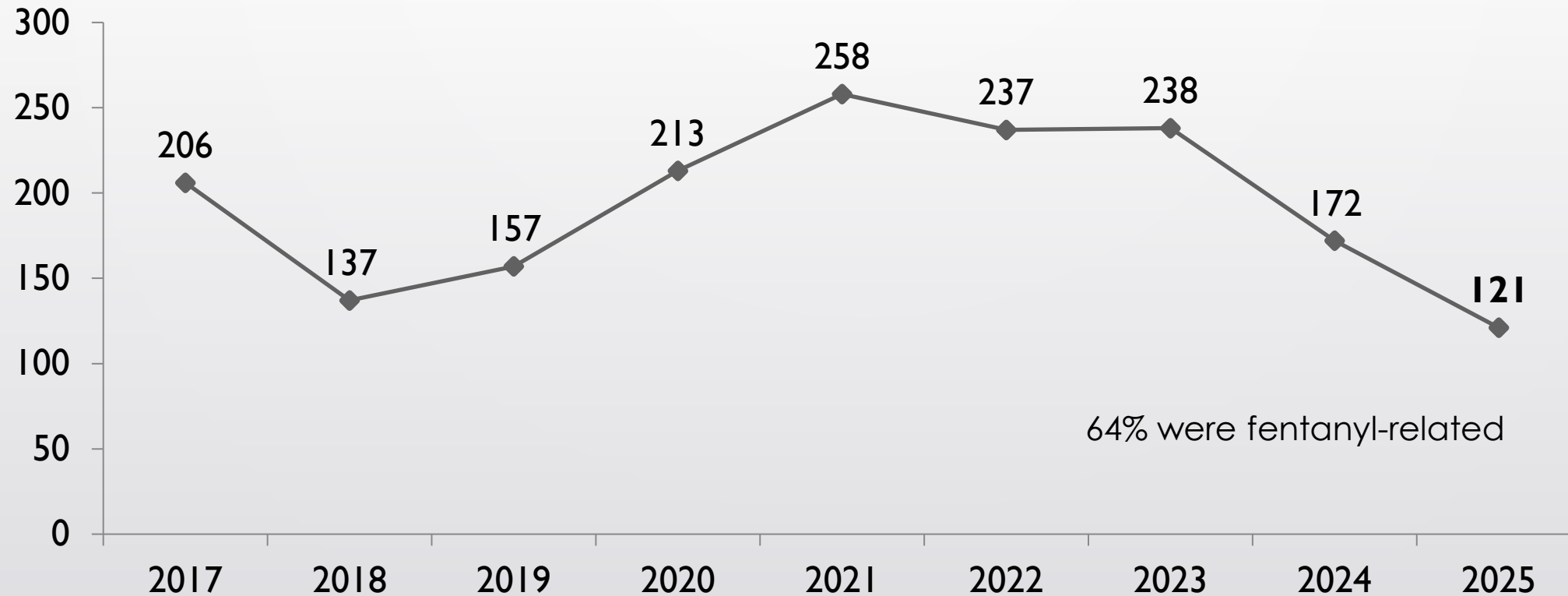
Cases of pediatric THC Exposures

THC Edible Cases Reported to the Iowa Poison Control Center

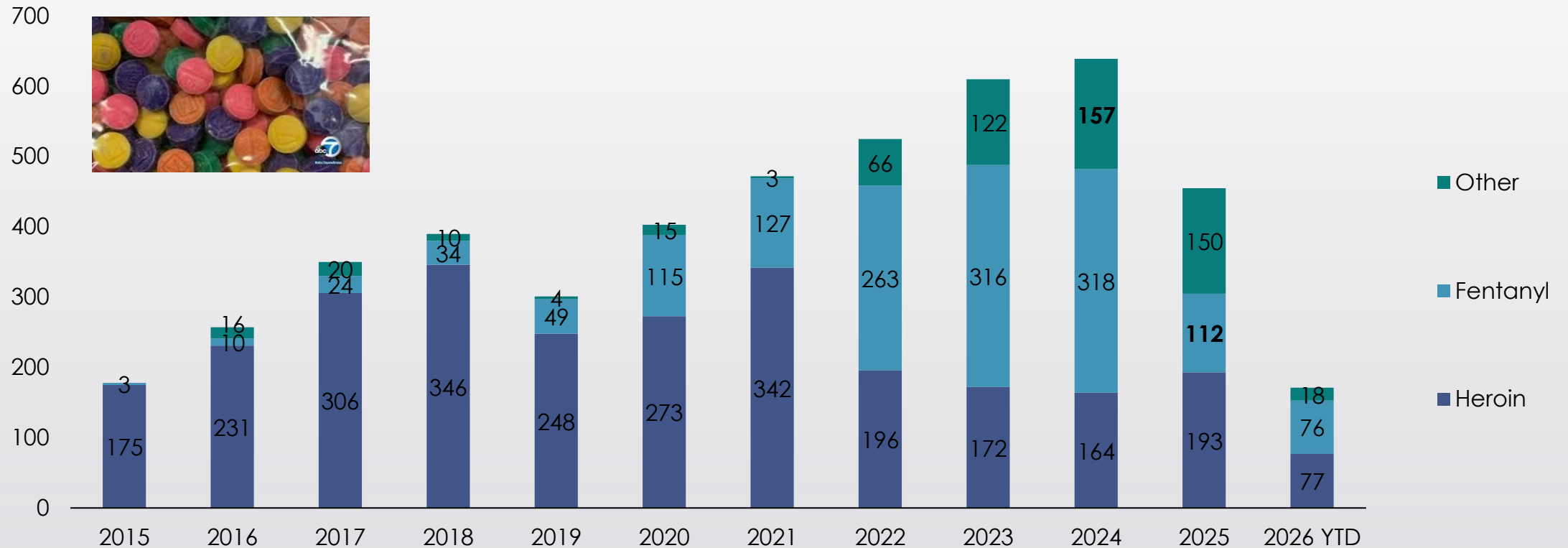
Pediatric (kids under the age of 6) accidental edible marijuana exposure increased by 1,375% (2017–2021).



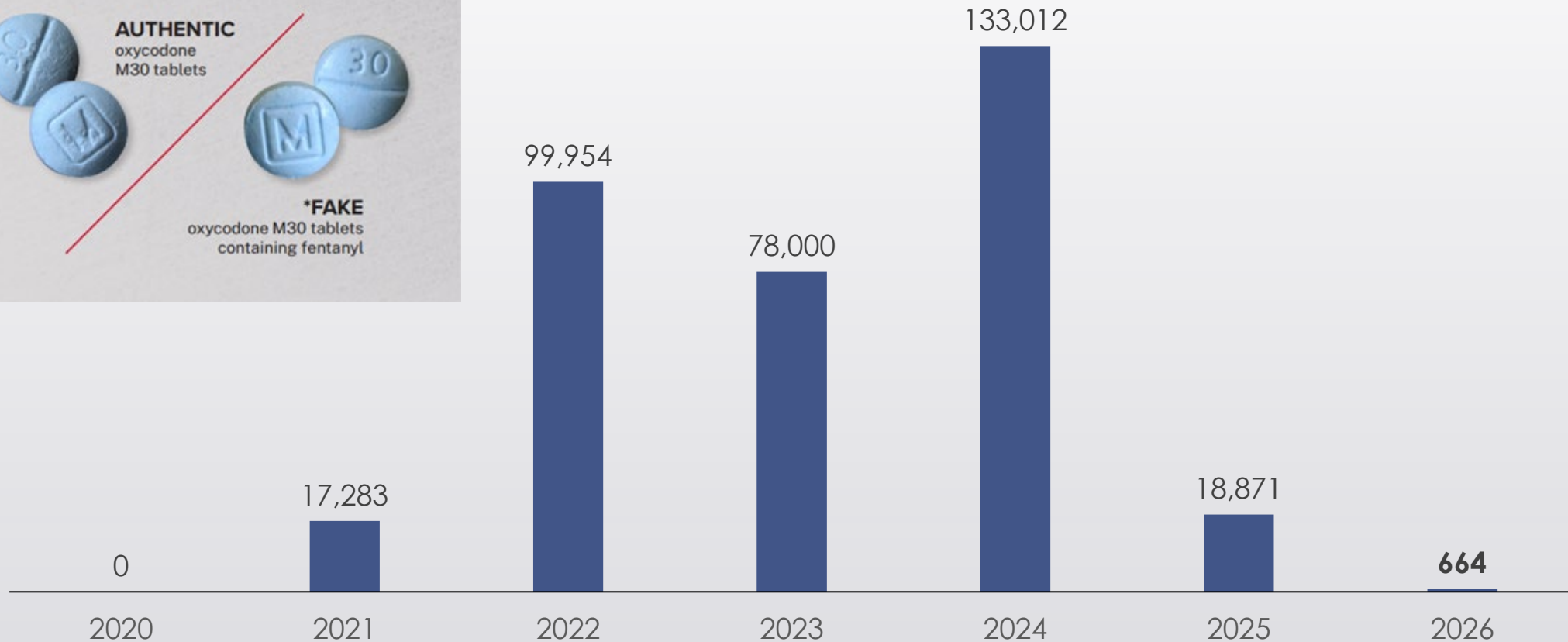
Opioid-Related Overdose Deaths



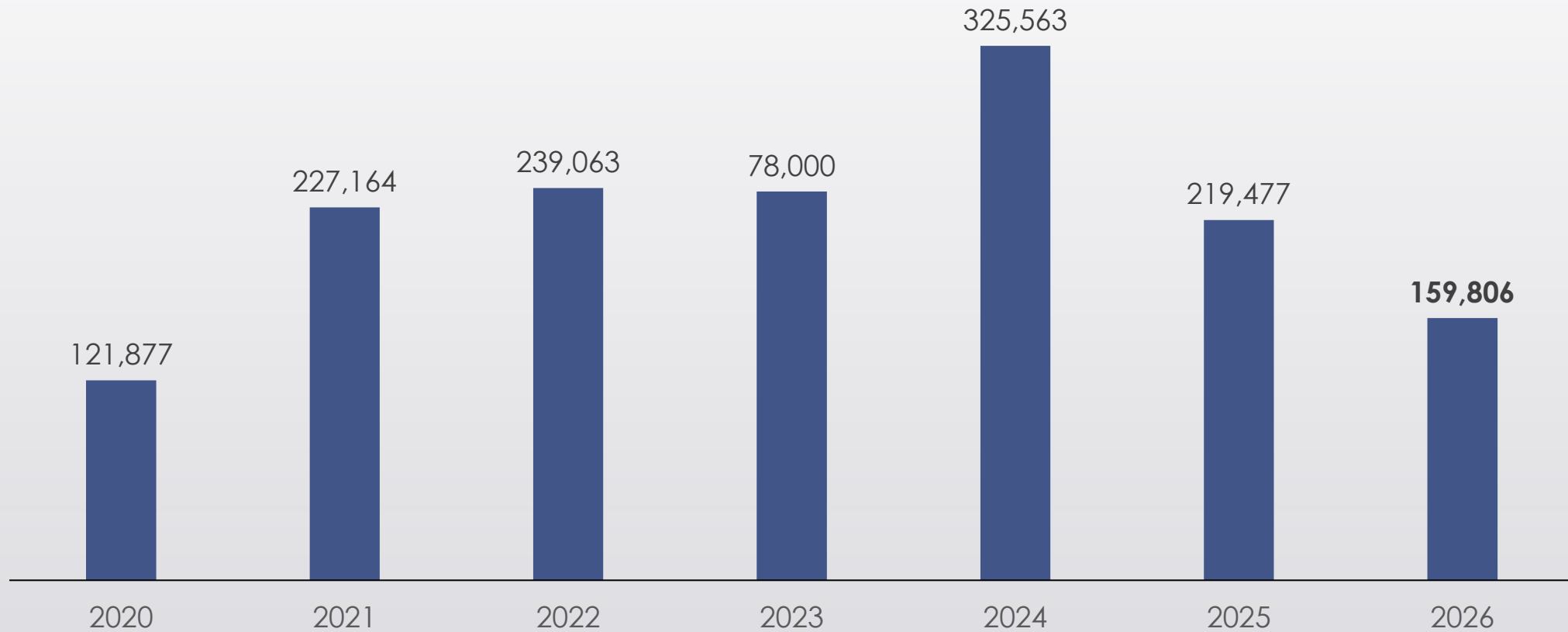
Law Enforcement Opioid Cases



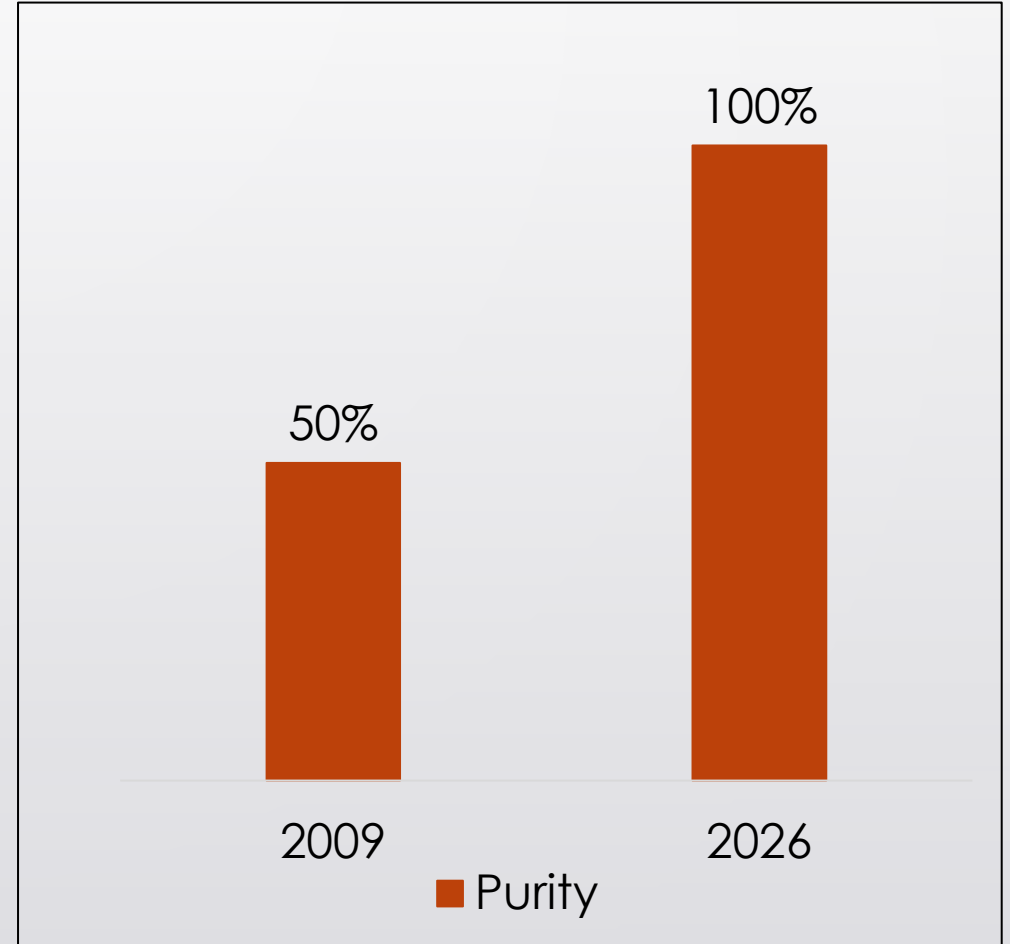
Iowa Crime Lab Counterfeit Pill Submissions



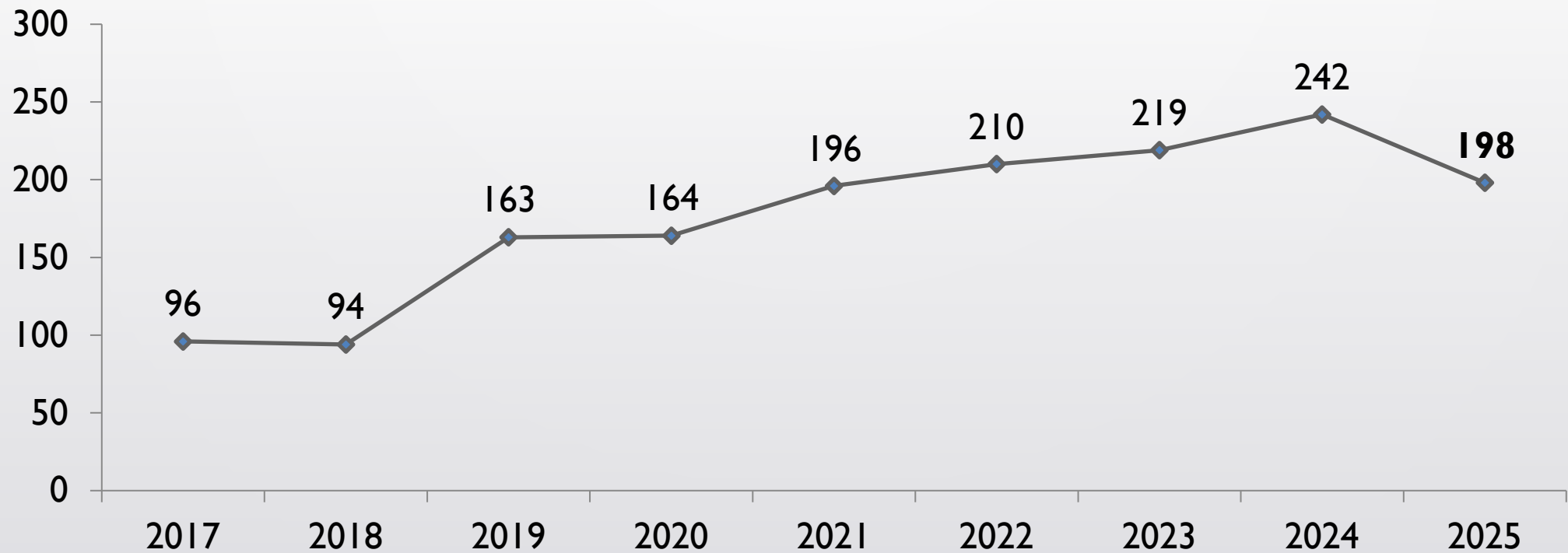
Iowa Crime Lab Meth Submissions



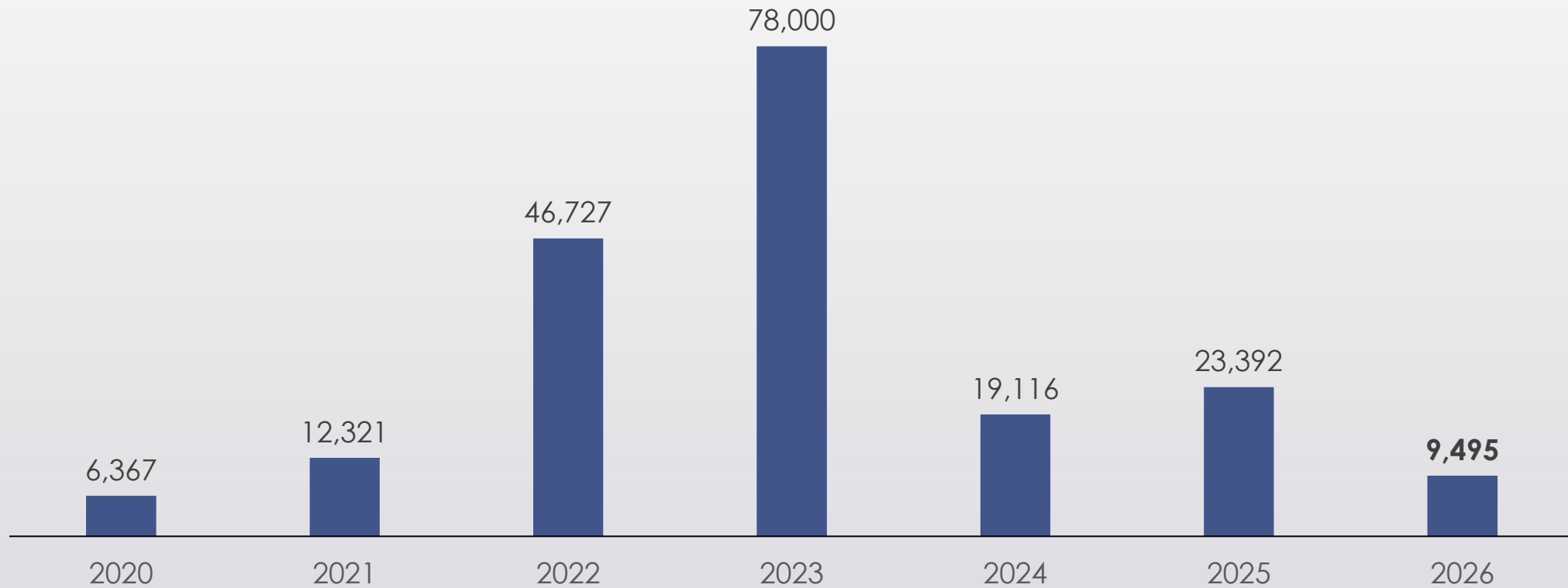
Methamphetamine



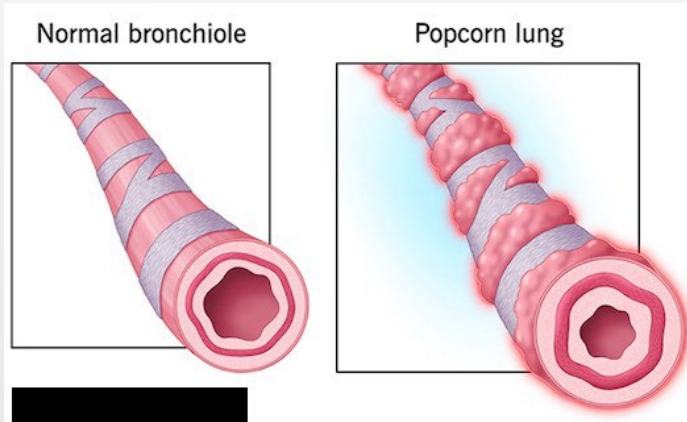
Iowa Psychostimulant-Related Deaths



Iowa Crime Lab Cocaine Submissions



Vaping and Nicotine



Vaping is NOT Harmless





Energy Drinks

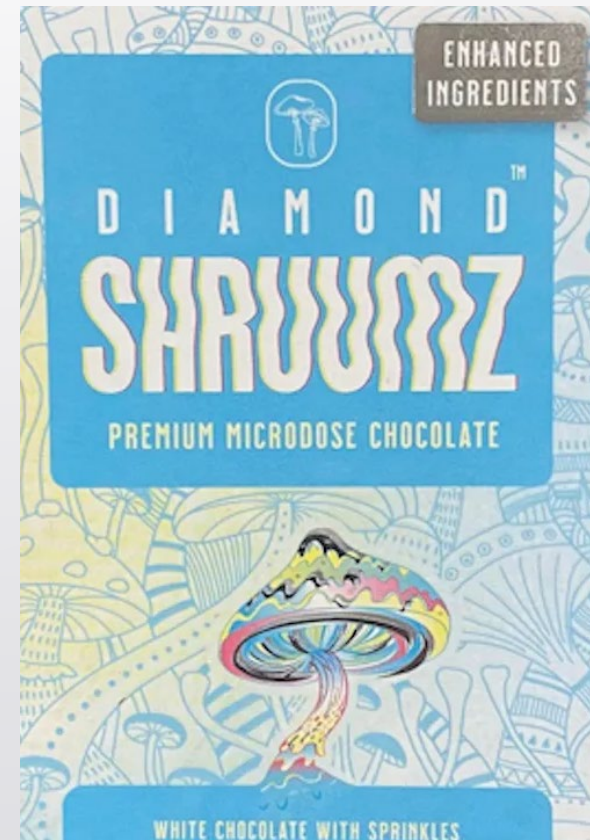
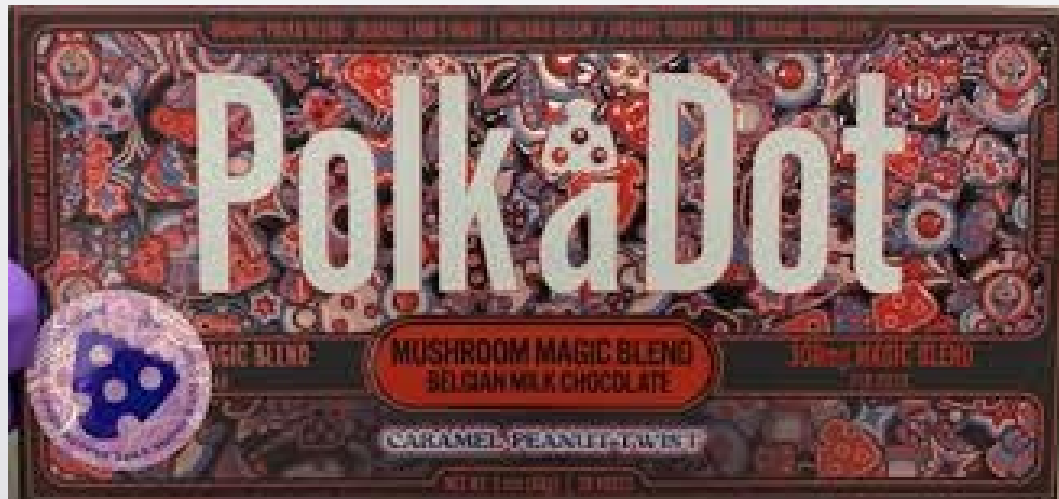


17-year-old Texas cheerleader

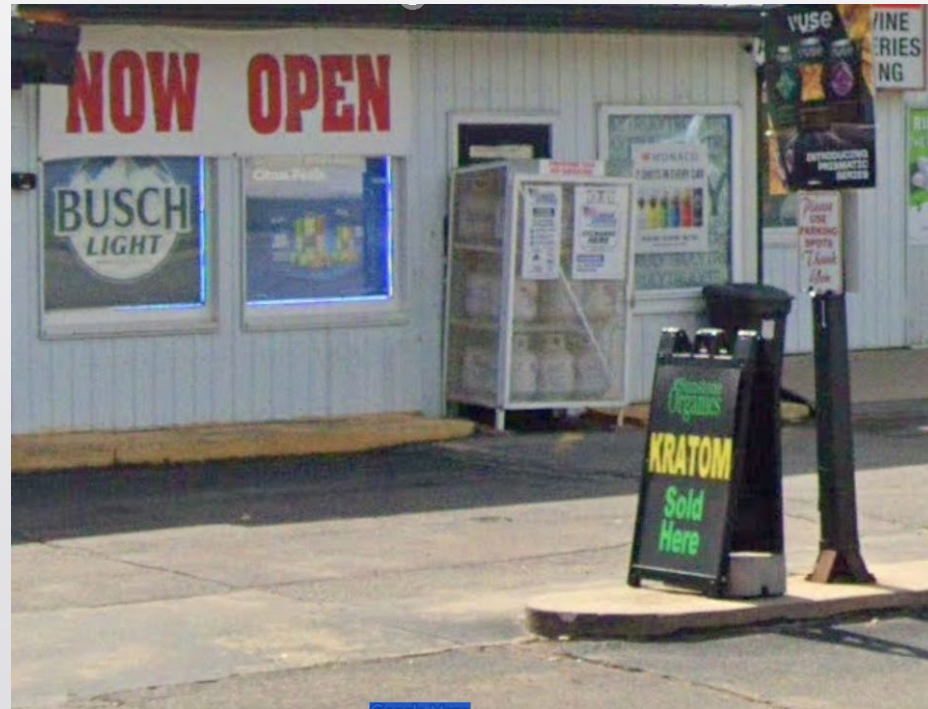
- Anxiety, irritation, dehydration, cardiac arrest, headaches, then sleepiness, fatigue, lower motivation to work, impaired mental performance, muscle stiffness, blood pressure issues, mood swings, aggression, anemia, heart palpitations
- Recommended max 400mg for adults, 100mg for kids



Mushrooms



Kratom and 7-OH





Kratom and 7-OH

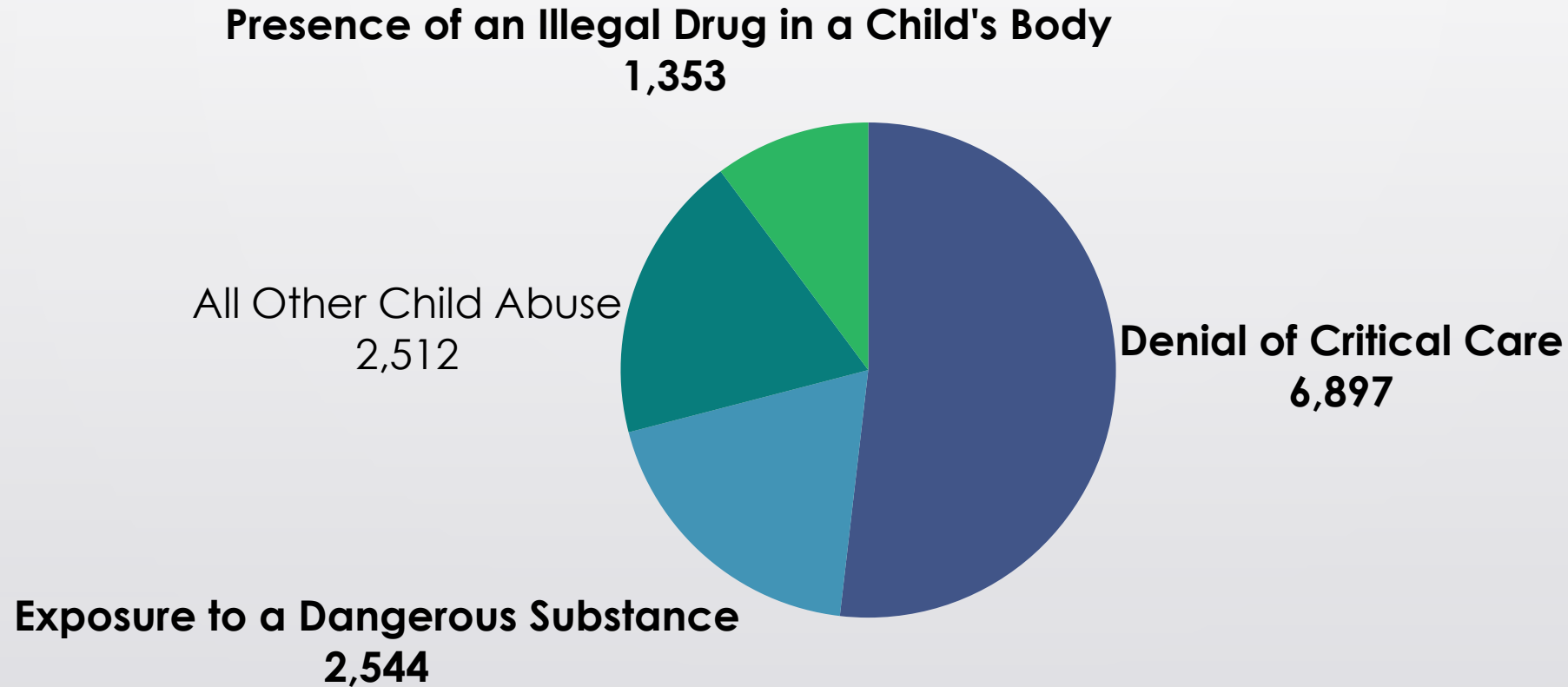
- DEA Action (only 3 compounds)
 - mitragynine pseudoindoxyl
 - MGM-15
 - MGM-16
- Awaiting Action on 7-OH
- Kratom plant IS still an issue – 2026 deaths



Emerging Drugs

- Xylazine
- Nitazines
- Medetomidine (Rhino tranq)
- Tianeptine
- Cyclorphone

Drug Endangered Children



DRUG-FREE Workplace

Drug Use in the Workplace

77%

of drug users are employed (Bureau of Labor Statistics)

5x

more likely to file a workers' compensation claim (Employee Assistance Society of North America)

3x

more likely than non-users to be late for work; users are absent 30-35 days per year (U.S. Chamber of Commerce)

Substances users are also:

- 33-50% less productive (National Institute on Drug Abuse)
- Absent 30-35 days per year and 3x more likely than non-users to be late for work (U.S. Chamber of Commerce)
- 3 to 4x more likely to have an accident on the job (Employee Assistance Society of North America)

Additionally, a person's alcohol use affects other employees. Twenty-one percent of workers report being put in danger or injured, having to redo work or cover for another employee, or needing to work harder due to others' drinking (JSI Research and Training Institute).

Alcohol Resources

- [DRINK LESS FOR YOUR BREASTS](#)
- [RETHINKING DRINKING](#)
- [REPORT: CANCER IN IOWA](#)
- [YOURLIFEIOWA](#)
- [HHS SUBSTANCE USE DISORDERS WEBSITE](#)

- [SAM Impact Report](#)
- [988 SUICIDE & CRISIS LIFELINE](#)
- [YOURLIFEIOWA](#)
- [TAKE BACKS/DRUG DISPOSAL](#)
- [GOOD SAMARITAN LAW – CALL 911](#)
- [MAT](#)
- [NALOXONEIOWA.ORG](#)

Other
Resources



The 2026 Iowa Drug Control Strategy is a comprehensive and flexible blueprint designed to achieve maximum effectiveness on multiple health and public safety fronts, including: preventing drug use, treating addictive behavior, helping Iowans get into recovery, interrupting illicit drug trafficking, and reducing overdose deaths. This report highlights drug trends, tactical responses, evidence-based practices and promising approaches, a thorough action plan for addressing current and emerging needs, and a summary of associated funding that flows through state agencies.

2026 Iowa Drug Control Strategy



Susie Sher, Bureau Chief

sher@dps.state.ia.us

515-805-4115