



Ohio HIDTA

Designated in 1999

Executive Director – Andrew Deserto

Purpose and Goals

The purpose of the Ohio HIDTA is to reduce the transportation, distribution, manufacture, and cultivation of illicit drugs by disrupting and dismantling DTOs and MLOs operating in Ohio, Northern Kentucky (NKY) and Western Pennsylvania (WPA). This is accomplished by supporting and coordinating the efforts of federal, state, and local law enforcement entities, as well as reporting measurable accomplishments of those efforts. The HIDTA utilizes the implementation of intelligence and operational strategies to respond to the threats posed to communities by the DTOs and MLOs operating throughout the country.

Strategy

The HIDTA's strategy is to incorporate the use of co-located law enforcement personnel from local, state, and federal agencies to identify, investigate, disrupt, and dismantle those DTOs/MLOs operating within the HIDTA AOR. These DTOs/MLOs are involved in the drug trafficking business within Ohio, NKY, and WPA, or they are utilizing the AOR to distribute and transport narcotics and facilitate the movement of ill-gotten gains from the drug trade in and outside of the region.

The 43 initiatives approved by the HIDTA Executive Board in Ohio, NKY, and WPA provide the basis of the HIDTA and its ability to combat the narcotics trade in HIDTA-designated counties, as well as throughout Ohio, NKY, and WPA. The strategy is successful at bringing together 296 federal, state, and local agencies, comprising 1,585 agents, officers, analysts, and other staff members. The impact of the strategy is evident by the information reported by the HIDTA in the PMP database.

Location

The HIDTA is headquartered in Cleveland, Ohio. The HIDTA comprises the following designated areas:

- Ohio: Adams, Allen, Butler, Cuyahoga, Fairfield, Franklin, Greene, Hamilton, Lorain, Lucas, Mahoning, Montgomery, Scioto, Stark, Summit, and Warren
- Kentucky: Boone, Campbell, and Kenton
- Pennsylvania: Allegheny, Beaver, Erie, Lawrence, Washington, and Westmoreland

Initiatives

The HIDTA currently supports 39 enforcement/interdiction initiatives, one management initiative, one training initiative, one intelligence initiative, and one information technology initiative.

Short-Term Objectives

YEAR	DTOs Expected to be Disrupted/ Dismantled	Target Return on Investment: Assets	Target Return on Investment: Drugs	Number of Investigations Expected to be Provided Analytical Support
2025	112	\$15.79	\$28.53	1,068

Threat Assessment

The Ohio HIDTA region continues to be inundated with illicit drug use and high levels of Substance Use Disorder (SUD) throughout the entirety of its AOR. The central location of the Ohio HIDTA between major United States drug distribution centers and the large amount of interstate highways easily accessible to drug traffickers make the region a hotbed of narcotics and bulk currency smuggling.

An analysis of responses from the 2025 Ohio HIDTA Threat Assessment Commanders' Survey (OHTACS) displayed a stable demand for all types of drugs throughout 2024. Decreased drug prices have been reported across the AOR for fentanyl, methamphetamine, and cocaine. This significant price decrease has been attributed to an increase in availability of these three drug types all across the AOR.

Synthetic opioids such as fentanyl are the greatest drug threat facing the majority of the Ohio HIDTA AOR. A total of 95 percent of respondents to the 2025 OHTACS reported that synthetic opioids were highly available, with 62 percent of respondents listing synthetic opioids as the greatest drug threat within their jurisdiction. In recent years, synthetic opioids have saturated the drug markets of Ohio, Northern Kentucky, and Western Pennsylvania and have replaced heroin as the opioid of choice. In 2024, seizures of heroin, powder cocaine, crack cocaine, and methamphetamine were all found to contain varying amounts of fentanyl. The presence of these highly potent synthetic opioids in related drug markets continues to be a major factor driving

record levels of overdose deaths across the AOR. Fentanyl pills designed to look like legitimate prescription drugs have been seized by numerous task forces across the AOR. In 2024, the number of kilograms of fentanyl seized by Ohio HIDTA task forces decreased to 316 kilograms, a 2 percent decrease from the previous year's total.

Methamphetamine has once again been ranked as the second greatest drug threat within the Ohio HIDTA AOR. A total of 77 percent of respondents to the 2025 OHTACS reported that crystal methamphetamine was highly available within their jurisdiction with 21 percent of task forces listing it as the greatest drug threat. Task force commanders reported an increase in the level of crystal methamphetamine availability in 46 percent of jurisdictions. Methamphetamine, specifically crystal methamphetamine, has seen a rapid expansion into the drug markets of the Ohio HIDTA AOR in recent years. Because of its highly addictive nature and less expensive cost, DTOs have pushed methamphetamine alongside fentanyl and cocaine allowing it to gain a foot hold in the area. In 2024, Ohio HIDTA task forces seized a record high total of 2,480 kilograms of methamphetamine. This represents a 156 percent increase from the previous year total of 970 kilograms of methamphetamine seized.

Cocaine has been ranked as the third greatest drug threat within the Ohio HIDTA AOR. Cocaine continues to be highly available throughout the region. A total of 77 percent of task forces reported powder cocaine to be highly available while 51 percent reported high levels of crack cocaine available in their jurisdiction. The cocaine market appears to have remained stable in the region, with the majority of respondents reporting either no change or a slight increase in availability when compared to 2023. Fentanyl has been found within samples of both powder cocaine and crack cocaine at alarming levels within the Ohio HIDTA AOR. The presence of the highly potent and ultra-deadly synthetic opioid alongside cocaine presents a deadly threat to the drug market within the region and has fueled the surge of fatal drug related overdose incidents. Ohio HIDTA task forces seized a total of 2,376 kilograms of powder cocaine in 2024. This is a 93 percent increase when compared to the 1,232 kilograms seized in 2023. A total of 15 kilograms of crack cocaine were seized in 2024 which is slightly higher than 2023's total of 14 kilograms of crack cocaine seized.

Heroin has been ranked as the 4th greatest drug threat within the Ohio HIDTA AOR. Fentanyl has seemingly replaced heroin as the illicit opioid of choice across the AOR, but heroin is still present in the region's drug supply and poly-drug mixtures. In 2024, Ohio HIDTA task forces seized 49 kilograms of heroin. This total is a 48% increase compared to 2023's total of 33 kilograms of heroin seized. Although this increase seems significant, heroin seizure levels are still significantly below where they were before fentanyl replaced it within the region's drug supply.

Illicit marijuana is ranked as the fifth greatest drug threat within the Ohio HIDTA AOR. High-grade marijuana from domestic sources of supply across the United States, such as California, Colorado, Arizona, Oklahoma, and Michigan, are readily available to users within the Ohio HIDTA AOR. This marijuana has been cultivated to have much higher levels of THC compared to the previously encountered Mexican sourced low-grade marijuana. Ohio HIDTA task forces seized a total of 10,979 kilograms of marijuana in 2024 to include both bulk marijuana and marijuana plants. This is a 50 percent increase from 2023 when Ohio HIDTA task forces seized a total of 22,103 kilograms of bulk marijuana and marijuana plants.

The misuse of CPDs remains a threat to the Ohio HIDTA AOR. Although the total number of prescription opioids dispensed continues to fall each year, a certain percentage of those doses still end up diverted and misused within the area. Some of the most commonly misused and legitimately prescribed drugs of note within the region are Percocet®, OxyContin®, Vicodin® and tramadol. Doses of these medications are acquired via various methods of diversion including theft, trade for other drug types and sale from a legitimately prescribed patient. The cost of use for these prescription drugs remains relatively high, with several of the drug types fetching \$1 per each milligram of drug contained in the pill. The more pressing concern within the prescription drug market is that of counterfeit prescription medication being consumed in the area. It is not uncommon for users to purchase a pill that has the same appearance of a legitimate prescription medication like oxycodone or alprazolam but the pills actually contain fentanyl, methamphetamine and other cutting agents. The risk of illness and death from unintentional overdoses of these products is alarmingly high. It is nearly impossible for the drug user to differentiate between the actual contents of the pills compared to what it is they think they are purchasing. At the dosage unit (DU) level, the total amount of CPDs seized fell from 93,944 DU in 2023 to 35,003 DU in 2024, a 63 percent decrease. Kilogram level seizures of CPDs decreased from 55 kilograms seized in 2023 to 39 kilograms seized in 2024, a 29 percent decrease.

3,4-methylenedioxy-methamphetamine (MDMA) seizures reached record levels in 2024, rising to a total 242 kilograms seized. This represents a 1,521 percent increase over the previous six-year average of 15 kilograms seized from 2018 – 2023. The total amount seized in 2024 was inflated by four large seizures of MDMA where the amount seized (76 kg, 70 kg, 40 kg, and 23 kg) was greater than the previous annual averages. MDMA continues to have a stable but smaller market within the Ohio HIDTA AOR. A total of 67 percent of task forces surveyed reported no change in the level of availability of MDMA in 2024 compared to 2023 levels. MDMA is frequently found at clubs and music festivals in the area. Purchases of MDMA frequently occur via dark web marketplaces and have international sources such as Europe, Canada, Asia, and Mexico.

An emerging trend the past two years has been the sudden explosion of psilocybin seizures within the AOR. Before 2020, annual kilogram seizures of psilocybin by Ohio HIDTA task forces remained relatively stable, with task forces seizing 8 kilograms in 2018, 8 kilograms in 2019, and 5 kilograms in 2020. Those numbers sky-rocketed 974 percent in 2021 when Ohio HIDTA task forces seized 58 kilograms of psilocybin, a record-high. After a slight decrease down to 34 kilograms seized in 2022, psilocybin seizures have once again exploded across the Ohio HIDTA AOR. In 2023, Ohio HIDTA task forces seized a new record 162 kilograms of psilocybin. After reporting a slight decrease of 85 kilograms seized in 2024, Ohio HIDTA task forces have already reported 120 kilograms of psilocybin seized in the 1st quarter of 2025. This quarterly total surpasses the total for all of 2024 and will likely increase to, if not exceed the previous record of 162 kilograms seized by the end of 2025.

Moderate levels of other drug types are also reported by Ohio HIDTA task forces in the field. Availability of synthetic cathinones (bath salts), synthetic cannabinoids (synthetic marijuana) and synthetic hallucinogens such as lysergic acid diethylamide (LSD) and phenylcyclohexyl piperidine (PCP) have all been reported in the moderate to low levels across the region.

The drug threat in the Ohio HIDTA AOR is heavily influenced by international Mexican DTOs. These DTOs are primarily responsible for the production, transportation and distribution of major drugs in the area such as synthetic opioids, heroin, methamphetamine, and cocaine. Mexican DTOs use the vast interstate highway system to coordinate the supply of bulk amounts of narcotics to the various drug markets in the region. Larger cities like Columbus, Cleveland, Cincinnati, and Pittsburgh may see direct shipments of product to their cities, but travel to major drug markets such as Chicago, Detroit, New York, and Philadelphia are also routinely encountered.

Intelligence Initiatives

The HIDTA ISC performs a significant role in supporting the strategy and all of the initiatives throughout the year as they execute strategic, tactical, and operational activities to achieve targeted objectives. Intelligence analysts execute a vital function to enhance the coordination between initiatives and agencies to accomplish results as mandated by the National HIDTA Program goals. Full-time, part-time, co-located, and multiagency personnel, with the use of a myriad of analytical tools, provide the backbone to this crucial infrastructure. Intelligence subsystem activities have been extremely successful in performing the following key functions on behalf of initiatives and participating agencies:

- accomplishing essential analytical case support to the HIDTA law enforcement initiatives and participating agencies, whose analytical resources otherwise are either very limited or non-existent;
- facilitating connectivity between and/or among local, state, and federal LEAs; criminal databases; other intelligence databases; HIDTA ISCs; and open-source databases;
- assisting in the development of drug threat assessments and initiative description and budget proposals;
- creating actionable intelligence recommendations on DTOs and their members;
- providing SAR referrals for MLOs and their members; and
- coordinating drug intelligence symposiums for the exchange of drug intelligence and networking opportunities amongst investigators and analysts from HIDTA initiatives, participating agencies, and other law enforcement entities in the HIDTA region.

The ISC intelligence component provides a full range of intelligence analytical support to other HIDTA initiatives, participating agencies, and other appropriate law enforcement and intelligence community entities. There is an expanding exchange of tactical, operational, and strategic intelligence between the HIDTA and other HIDTAs throughout the country. Core intelligence subsystem functions include: analytical case support, cell phone extraction analysis, cell phone ping analysis, crime mapping, database inquiry and exploration, event and subject deconfliction via Case Explorer, financial analysis/SAR review, GPS monitoring and analysis, heroin overdose incident form, link chart creation & analysis, ODMAP, overdose incident deconfliction form, pharmaceutical analysis, social networking investigation, and strategic intelligence.

The ISC consists of the Analytical Unit and the Case Explorer deconfliction system. The Case Explorer deconfliction system provides officer safety deconfliction to avoid hazardous encounters between law enforcement personnel by making agencies aware of conflicting actions being taken by their fellow agencies. The Case Explorer deconfliction system also facilitates the exchange of information between officers and agents potentially investigating the same subject. Both the Case Explorer deconfliction system and the Analytical Unit provide tactical intelligence to the HIDTA law enforcement initiatives, participating agencies, other HDTAs, and LEAs outside of the HIDTA region, utilizing a variety of law enforcement and public databases.

The ISC has also spearheaded the efforts to form shared overdose initiative groups within each of these trained counties. The purpose of these shared groups is to more efficiently link overdose investigators to overdose data from neighboring jurisdictions, as well as provide additional intelligence support that they may not have realized was available to them.

The HIDTA has also introduced ODMAP into the state, enables agencies to see overdose spikes, as well as the locations of overdose occurrences. The HIDTA is looking to utilize the data to work with public health officials in identifying at-risk individuals in need of treatment. As of July 2025, 86,449 overdoses were entered for 82 of the 88 Ohio counties. Currently, the HIDTA has 349 agencies signed up on participation agreements with the Washington/Baltimore HIDTA for access to ODMAP.

The HIDTA ISC hosts and coordinates a variety of drug intelligence training to facilitate the exchange of ideas and knowledge amongst intelligence analysts and drug investigators. It affords the opportunity for analyst and investigators from the HIDTA initiatives, HIDTA ISCs, and other LEAs in the Great Lakes Midwest region to network and share valuable intelligence information with the end goal of disrupting drug-trafficking activities.

Task Forces Operating in the HIDTA Region

The table below highlights the federally funded drug enforcement task forces operating in the HIDTA region. Multiple HIDTA task forces may make up an overarching HIDTA enforcement or investigative initiative.

FEDERALLY FUNDED TASK FORCES	LOCATIONS
Akron Safe Streets Task Force	Summit County, OH
Akron/Summit Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Summit County, OH
Allegheny County Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Allegheny County, PA
Allen County Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Allen County, OH
Beaver County Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Beaver County, PA
Brown County Drug Task Force	Brown County, OH
Butler Undercover Regional Narcotics Task Force (HIDTA)	Butler County, OH
Cartel, Gang, Narcotics and Laundering Task Force (HIDTA)	Cuyahoga County, OH
Central Ohio Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Franklin County, OH

FEDERALLY FUNDED TASK FORCES	LOCATIONS
Central Ohio Drug Enforcement Task Force	Coshocton, Know, Licking, Muskingum, and Perry Counties, OH
Cincinnati Law Enforcement Task Force (HIDTA)	Hamilton County, OH
Cincinnati Major Drug Offenders Unit	Hamilton County, OH
Cincinnati Regional Narcotics Unit	Hamilton County, OH
Clermont County Drug Task Force	Clermont County, OH
Columbiana County Drug Task Force	Columbiana County, OH
DEA Cincinnati Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Hamilton County, OH
DEA Cleveland Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Cuyahoga County, OH
DEA Columbus Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Franklin County, OH
DEA Pittsburgh Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Allegheny County, PA
DEA Toledo Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Lucas County, OH
DEA Youngstown Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Mahoning County, OH
Delaware County Drug Task Force	Delaware County, OH
Drug Abuse Reduction Task Force	Hamilton County, OH
Franklin County Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Franklin County, OH
Grand Lake Task Force	Auglaize and Mercer Counties, OH
Greene County Agencies for Combined Enforcement (HIDTA)	Greene County, OH
Hardin County Crime Task Force	Hardin County, OH
HSI Border Enforcement Security Team Interdiction Initiative (HIDTA)	Cuyahoga County, OH
HSI/Pennsylvania State Police Interdiction Task Force (HIDTA)	Allegheny County, PA
Hotel Interdiction Team (HIDTA)	Cuyahoga County, OH
Jackson County Drug Task Force	Jackson County, OH
Jefferson County Drug Task Force	Jefferson County, OH
Lake County Narcotics Agency	Lake County, OH
Lawrence County Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Lawrence County, PA
Lawrence Drug and Major Crimes Task Force	Lawrence County, OH
Logan County Drug Task Force	Logan County, OH
Lorain County Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Lorain County, OH
Mahoning Valley Law Enforcement Task Force (HIDTA)	Mahoning County, OH
Major Crimes Unit (HIDTA)	Athens, Fairfield, and Hocking Counties, OH
Medina County Drug Task Force	Medina County, OH
Medway Drug Enforcement Agency	Wayne and Medina Counties, OH

FEDERALLY FUNDED TASK FORCES	LOCATIONS
METRICH Enforcement Unit	Ashland, Crawford, Hancock, Huron, Marion, Morrow, Richland, Seneca, and Wyandot Counties, OH
Miami Valley Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Montgomery County, OH
Multi-Area Narcotics Unit	Defiance, Fulton, Henry, Putnam, and Williams Counties, OH
Northern Kentucky Drug Strike Force (HIDTA)	Boone, Campbell, and Kenton Counties, KY
Northern Kentucky Parcel Task Force (HIDTA)	Kenton County, KY
Northern Ohio Violent Fugitive Task Force (HIDTA)	Statewide (OH)
Northwest Pennsylvania Drug Initiative (HIDTA)	Erie County, PA
Ohio Highway Interdiction Initiative (HIDTA)	Statewide (OH)
Ottawa County Drug Task Force	Ottawa County, OH
Pennsylvania Highway Interdiction Initiative (HIDTA)	Allegheny, Beaver, and Washington Counties, PA
Pittsburgh Bureau of Police/DEA Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Allegheny County, PA
Portage County Sheriff's Office Drug and Violent Crime Unit	Portage County, OH
Regional Agencies Narcotics and Gun Enforcement Task Force	Clark, Montgomery, and Preble Counties, OH
Sandusky County Drug Task Force	Sandusky County, OH
Southeast Area Law Enforcement Task Force	Cuyahoga County, OH
Southern Ohio Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Scioto County, OH
Southern Ohio Fugitive Apprehension Strike Team (HIDTA)	Statewide (OH)
Stark County Safe Streets Task Force (HIDTA)	Stark County, OH
Stark County Sheriff's Office Metro Narcotics Unit	Stark County, OH
Toledo Metro Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Lucas County, OH
Trumbull Action Group	Trumbull County, OH
United States 23 Major Crimes Task Force	Fayette, Highland, Pickaway, Pike, and Ross Counties, OH
Columbus Violent Crime Task Force	Franklin County, OH
Warren County Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Warren County, OH
Washington County Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Washington County, PA
West Central Ohio Crime Task Force	Allen County, OH
Western Pennsylvania Fugitive Task Force (HIDTA)	Allegheny County, PA
Westmoreland County Drug Task Force (HIDTA)	Westmoreland County, PA
Westshore Enforcement Bureau Drug Task Force	Cuyahoga County, OH

Task Force Coordination

Through oversight by the HIDTA Executive Board, initiatives are managed, reviewed, and funded in a consistent manner with a focus on achieving the mission to disrupt and dismantle DTOs/MLOs. Annual review of each initiative, use of the four subcommittees created by the Executive Board, task force commander meetings, and submission of initiative descriptions and budget proposals help ensure that each initiative is meeting the goals and objectives of the HIDTA Program.

The HIDTA ISC provides the platform for intelligence information sharing, deconfliction services, and investigative support for the initiatives. The ISC ensures information sharing among initiatives to avoid duplication of effort and resources. This ISC complements the other operational initiatives through its support and facilitates a comprehensive intelligence strategy that enables overall initiative cohesiveness. The Training Initiative coordinates all law enforcement, analytical, and management training, and it provides a mechanism for consistent training to all of the operational initiatives. Finally, the Information Technology Initiative provides IT systems and support to all member agencies.

Operational initiatives are reviewed annually to ensure they are operating according to their mission statement, addressing the identified drug problem in their area of operation, operating according to the PPBG, properly recording data in the PMP system, deconflicting events and subject/cases, sharing information, and properly utilizing funds. Initiatives are spread out through 25 counties, including three in NKY and six in WPA. Only in Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Lucas, and Mahoning in Ohio, and Allegheny in WPA are there more than one HIDTA initiative in operation. In these counties, the demand for narcotics enforcement necessitates multiple initiatives. These initiatives work together when needed, share information on a daily basis, and at times have different areas of focus in terms of geography, type of DTO/MLO, or narcotic distribution.

The Ohio Highway Interdiction Initiative (OHII) and the Pennsylvania Highway Interdiction Initiative (PAII) remain conduits of information to the traditional drug task forces based upon the vast amount of highway interdictions conducted. All information obtained from highway interdiction is shared with the nearest HIDTA task force, and seizures are entered into the NSS. In turn, task forces rely on OHII and PAII participants to provide support on the highways when interdiction of drug and/or cash shipments is warranted. In 2024 OHII and PAII seized approximately \$40 million in wholesale value of drugs, and more than \$7.4 million in cash and assets. The highway interdiction initiatives also utilize the Case Explorer deconfliction system for all interdictions, further ensuring coordination with traditional task forces.

The Northern Ohio Violent Fugitive Task Force and the Southern Ohio Fugitive Apprehension Strike Force provide support in locating drug fugitives identified by other initiatives. These initiatives also utilize deconfliction to determine if a subject has been arrested in another initiative's investigation. The number of fugitives apprehended for 2024 was 4,839, of which 954 were sought for drug-related crimes. The removal of 954 drug felons from the streets of their communities had a direct impact on the reduction of crime and the distribution of illegal drugs. The HIDTA anticipates that 4,316 fugitives will be targeted and apprehended in 2025.

HIDTA Evaluation

The Ohio HIDTA remains an effective and efficient platform to continue development of law enforcement partnerships, coordinate investigative information sharing, and support the *National Drug Control Strategy*. In 2024, the HIDTA disrupted or dismantled 116 DTOs/MLOs operating in the region. Of those disrupted or dismantled, 35 were international, 65 were multistate, and 16 were local. The estimated wholesale value of drugs seized in 2024 was more than \$198.5 million. Cash and other drug-related assets seized totaled more than \$27.48 million. The ROI for drugs and assets seized in 2024 was \$38.50.

YEAR	DTOs Expected to be Disrupted/ Dismantled	Target Return on Investment: Assets	Target Return on Investment: Drugs	Number of Investigations Expected to be Provided Analytical Support
2024	114	\$11.30	\$23.60	702
YEAR	DTOs Disrupted/ Dismantled	Return on Investment: Assets	Return on Investment: Drugs	Number of Investigations Provided Analytical Support
2024	116	\$4.68	\$33.81	1,365