

## FENTANYL USE IN MONTANA

## About Fentanyl:<sup>1,2</sup>

- Fentanyl is a synthetic opioid that is about 50 times stronger than heroin and 100 times stronger than morphine.
- There are two types of fentanyl: pharmaceutical fentanyl and illegally made fentanyl (IMF).
  - Pharmaceutical fentanyl is prescribed by doctors, often after surgery and for advanced-stage cancers to manage pain.
  - IMF is distributed through illegal drug markets and is often added to other drugs due to its potency. People using drugs may not be aware that their drugs contain fentanyl.
- Fentanyl has been associated with recent increases in opioid overdoses, and most cases of fentanyl overdoses are related to IMF.

## **Key Points:**

- In Montana, the rate of fentanyl overdose emergency department visits increased from 4.4 visits per 100,000 residents in 2021 (46 visits) to 13.0 visits per 100,000 residents in 2023 (137 visits).<sup>3</sup>
- The percentage of fatal drug overdoses in Montana involving fentanyl increased from 16% in 2020 to 50% in 2023.<sup>4</sup>
- Among testing of seized drug samples, there was a 24% increase in fentanyl prevalence during 2023, and a 3600% increase from 2020 to 2023.<sup>5</sup> The Montana Department of Justice Forensic Science Division analyzed 17,722 samples from 2020 to 2023.

## **References:**

- 1. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. (2024). <u>Fentanyl Facts</u>.
- 2. United States Drug Enforcement Administration. (2021). Facts About Fentanyl.
- 3. Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. (2024). <u>Injury and Overdose</u> <u>Indicators Dashboard</u>.
- 4. Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services. (2024). <u>Drug Overdose</u> <u>Deaths in Montana, 2014-2023</u>.
- 5. Montana Department of Justice Forensic Science Division. (2024). <u>Annual Report –</u> 2023.

For more information on what the Department of Public Health and Human Services is doing to address substance use disorder in Montana, please visit <u>https://dphhs.mt.gov/opioid</u>.