



**U. S. Department of Justice**  
Drug Enforcement Administration  
Philadelphia Field Division  
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*www.dea.gov*

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Senator Gene Yaw  
Chairman  
The Center for Rural Pennsylvania  
625 Forster Street  
Harrisburg, Pennsylvania  
17120

**Testimony of Special Agent in Charge Gary Tuggle  
Public Hearing on the State of Addiction  
October 26, 2017  
Williamsport, Pennsylvania**

The greatest drug threat across the Commonwealth is the pervasive influence of Mexican Transnational Criminal Organizations (TCO) operating within, and with direct ties to, Pennsylvania. These organizations persist in supplying kilogram quantities of high purity heroin and fentanyl to middle and low level criminal organizations, which ultimately are distributed to street level dealers and drug users in all corners of our state.

Heroin, sourced from Mexico TCO, has infiltrated all segments of our society; there are no socioeconomic, racial, or geographic boundaries to the plague that is heroin abuse. Philadelphia, serving as a source for our region, has the dubious distinction of selling the highest purity heroin in the country, and has for more than 15 years. As the demand for heroin has increased, the notion of heroin sales occurring only in urban areas has disappeared; instead, heroin can be found in the small towns and rural communities of our state previously untouched by the scourge of drug sales and abuse. Overdose death data analysis for 2016 showed more than 45% of deaths involved heroin, with more than 95% of Pennsylvania counties reporting a heroin related death.

While heroin has represented a significant threat to Pennsylvania for a number of years, the most significant change in the last three years in terms of drug trafficking and availability is the influx of fentanyl from foreign sources of supply. Illicitly produced fentanyl is sold alone, and in conjunction with other illicit drugs, such as cocaine and heroin; in addition, fentanyl related substances, such as acryl fentanyl, furanyl fentanyl, and 3-methylfentanyl, are increasingly available throughout Pennsylvania. The availability of fentanyl and related substances from myriad sources represents a complex and evolving threat to public health and safety. Data analysis shows us very clearly the dangerous nature of these substances, as a fentanyl related substance was involved in more than 52% of overdose deaths in Pennsylvania in 2016. More than 61 counties had a fentanyl related death in 2016, and fentanyl presence in overdose deaths increased statewide by more than 130% over the previous year. Analysis of 2017 overdose data indicates this trend continues an upward trajectory, and will contribute to a significant increase in overdose deaths in many counties.

Fentanyl related substances, produced in China, are flooding into Pennsylvania via the internet and dark web, with new analogs identified almost monthly. In many instances, Pennsylvania is ground zero for these substances, as we are often the first state to identify new fentanyl related substances through overdose deaths and drug seizure analysis. In direct response to these threats, the DEA Philadelphia Field Division has designated heroin, fentanyl, and fentanyl related substances as the primary threat to be mitigated via enforcement actions and intelligence collection. Through the establishment of a fentanyl/high hazard task force group, the DEA Philadelphia Division is directly targeting fentanyl suppliers overseas and within our region. As part of these efforts, more than 40 kilograms of fentanyl were seized in three separate enforcement actions within, and with ties to, Pennsylvania in recent months. The removal of this deadly product from the drug sale pipeline undoubtedly has saved countless lives.

In response to the surge in fatal and non-fatal overdoses, resulting primarily from heroin, fentanyl, and related substances, the DEA Philadelphia Field Division established an overdose investigation project, known as *Operation Trojan Horse*, to identify and investigate drug sources of supply responsible for deaths. Through a combination of intelligence analysis and information sharing, investigation, enforcement action, and training, the DEA Philadelphia Field Division has assisted state and local law enforcement on more than 400 cases over the past two years. More than 20 of these cases have resulted in indictments for drug delivery resulting in death. The DEA Philadelphia Field Division is committed to working in conjunction with the U.S. Attorney's Offices in all of Pennsylvania's Judicial Districts, as well as with District Attorneys throughout the Commonwealth, to identify and prosecute drug dealers whose peddled poison has resulted in death.

The supply of diverted prescription opioids, particularly oxycodone, represents the origin of this epidemic, and continues as the feeder system for new heroin and fentanyl users. Whether originating from rogue practitioners operating outside of the scope of medical practice, or from doctor-shopping patients who fill multiple prescriptions for use and sale, prescription opioids are readily available for non-medical use. The diversion of these products away from their intended use in legitimate pain management is a significant threat throughout the Commonwealth. Analysis of prescribing trends in Pennsylvania revealed that more than 448 million dosage units of oxycodone and hydrocodone products were dispensed by Pennsylvania pharmacies in 2016, enough to supply 35 pills for every Pennsylvanian. Of particular note to this audience is that 18 of the top 20 counties with the highest rates of prescribing of oxycodone and hydrocodone per capita in 2016 were rural. The DEA Philadelphia Field Division operates two Tactical Diversion Squads (TDS), with an additional TDS being established early next year, to address this threat. Through the efforts of criminal investigators, in conjunction with DEA Diversion Investigators, the DEA Philadelphia Field Division identifies and investigates practitioners that represent a significant threat to their communities through the overprescribing of opioids. During Fiscal Year 2017, the DEA Philadelphia Field Division, which regulates 74,887 registrants across Pennsylvania, administratively sanctioned 96 registrants and levied \$824,000 in fines against registrants across Pennsylvania.

The DEA Philadelphia Field Division maintains a robust intelligence collection and sharing program. The collection and analysis of data from public health sources, as well as law enforcement sources, drives investigations into drug trafficking organizations and identifies trends in drug

distribution. This data analysis is also vital for state and county agencies and public health and treatment entities in making informed decisions regarding resource allocation and to develop strategies to address the overdose epidemic. In an effort to educate and inform the public in these aforementioned areas, the DEA Philadelphia Field Division collects overdose death data from each of Pennsylvania's 67 counties and publishes an annual *Analysis of Drug Overdose Deaths in Pennsylvania* report; this comprehensive document identifies trends in drug availability as evidenced by overdose death data at the county level. The DEA Philadelphia Field Division Intelligence Program also conducts analyses of Prescription Drug Monitoring Program data at the strategic level, as well as analysis of drug seizure data, and naloxone administration data, all with the intent of supporting the DEA mission, in addition to sharing information with stakeholders throughout the Commonwealth.

Finally, the DEA Philadelphia Field Division's community outreach efforts and partnership with local public health, social service, drug treatment entities, and coalition groups are key to the DEA's mission of raising awareness about the deadly cycle of prescription opioid and heroin abuse. In 2016, the DEA and Discovery Education embarked on a three year partnership with *Operation Prevention*; a STEM-based online curriculum designed for elementary, middle, and high school students, teachers, and parents about the science behind opioid addiction. This free curriculum is available at [www.operationprevention.com](http://www.operationprevention.com). In addition, the DEA offers numerous other free educational resources, such as pamphlets, brochures, and documentaries, about the dangers of drug use that are available at [www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov).

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