EMPOWER HENRICO

Preventing, Treating and Combating Substance Use

November 2026 Overdose Response Strategy (ORS) Trends, Analysis & Threats (TAT) Webinar Summary

Empower Task Force Meeting

November 19, 2026

ABOUT THE OVERDOSE RESPONSE STRATEGY (ORS)*

The ORS is a nationally coordinated, cross-sector collaboration between public health and public safety. The mission of the ORS is to help communities reduce fatal and non-fatal drug overdoses by connecting public health and public safety agencies, sharing information and supporting evidence-based interventions.

ORS Program Goals:

1. Share data systems to inform rapid and effective community overdose prevention efforts.
2. Support immediate, evidence-based response efforts that can directly reduce overdose deaths.
3. Design and use promising strategies at the intersection of public health and public safety.
4. Support the implementation of evidence-informed prevention strategies that can reduce substance use and overdose.

**ORS acknowledges that all data is shared voluntarily by data owners in advance of public release and can be preliminary and incomplete. ORS does not own or manage any of the data presented.*

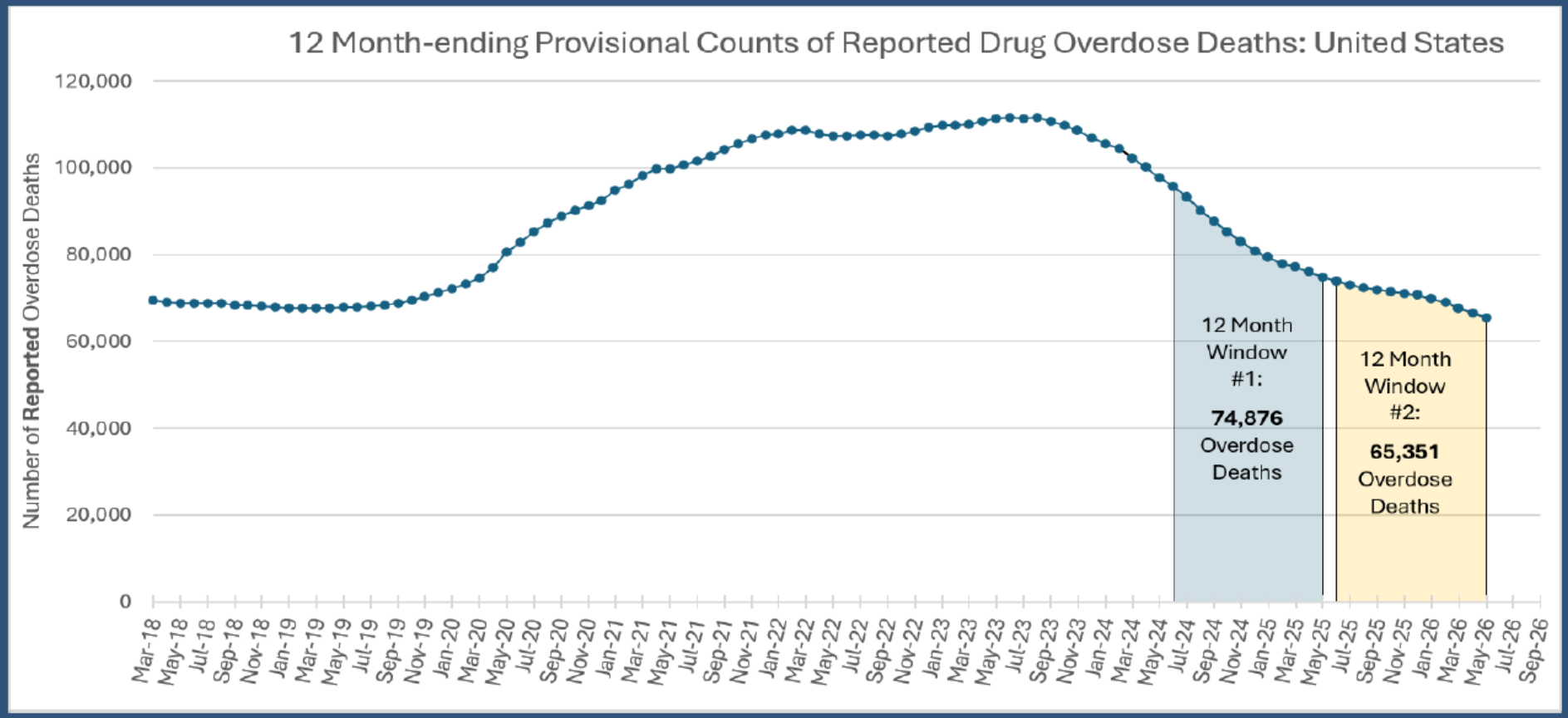
November 2026 ORS-TAT Presenter

Center for Forensic Science Research & Education (CFSRE)

Alex J. Krotulski, PhD | Director – Toxicology & Chemistry | Program Manager – NPS Discovery

Dr. Krotulski provided an overview of the current drug landscape, highlighting an open access drug early warning system that leverages collaboration among forensic sciences, public health, emergency medicine, and public safety partners to identify emerging substances and evolving drug threats across the United States. He also highlighted emerging trends involving products commonly encountered in smoke shops and gas stations, including Kratom, 7-OH, and related derivatives.

National Picture - Overdose Mortality



Percent Change for United States

-12.7

Based on data available for analysis on: **October 4th, 2026**

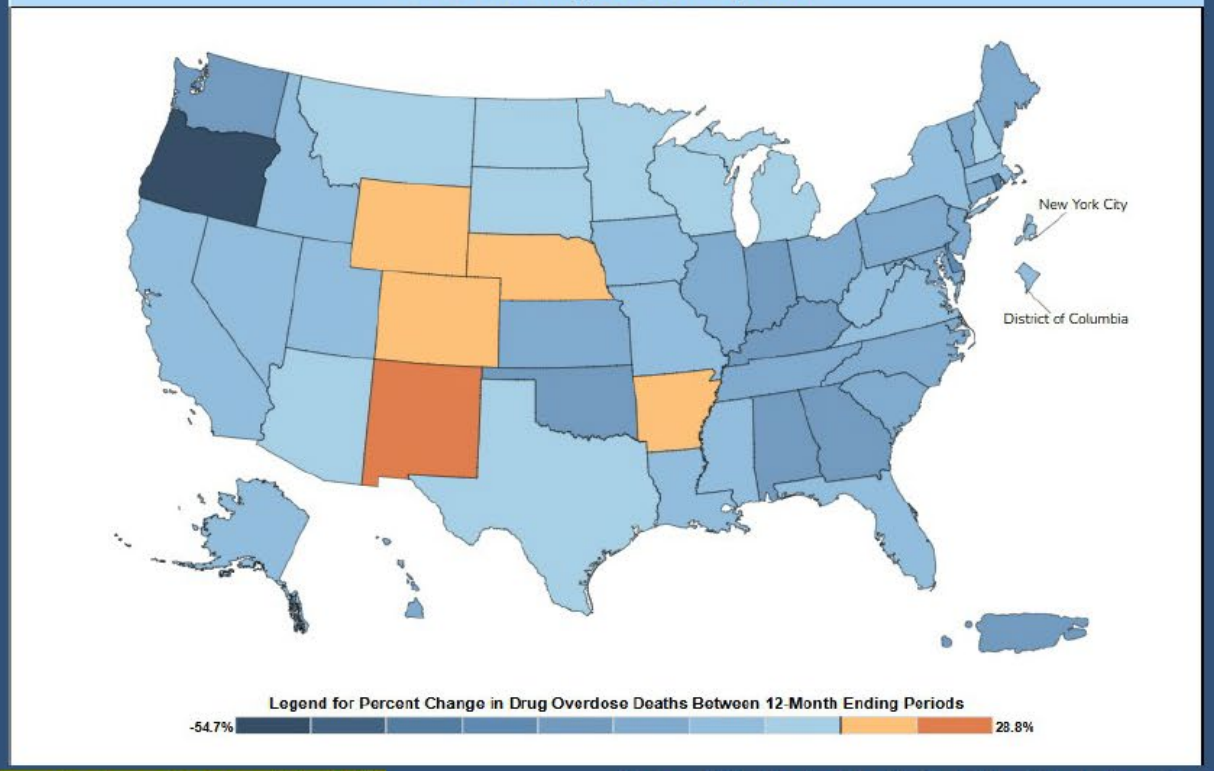
National Center for Health Statistics, Provisional Drug Overdose Death Counts

As of October 2026, there were ~65,000 lives lost to overdose for the 12-month period ending May 2026, roughly 9,000 fewer lives lost when compared to the same 12-month period from the prior year. Most states are declining, but there is wide regional variation; from a 55% decrease in Oregon to a nearly 29% increase in New Mexico.

Regional Variation in Overdose Mortality

National Picture - Overdose Mortality

Figure 1b. Percent Change in Reported 12 Month-ending Count of Drug Overdose Deaths, by Jurisdiction: May 2025 to May 2026



Percent Change for United States

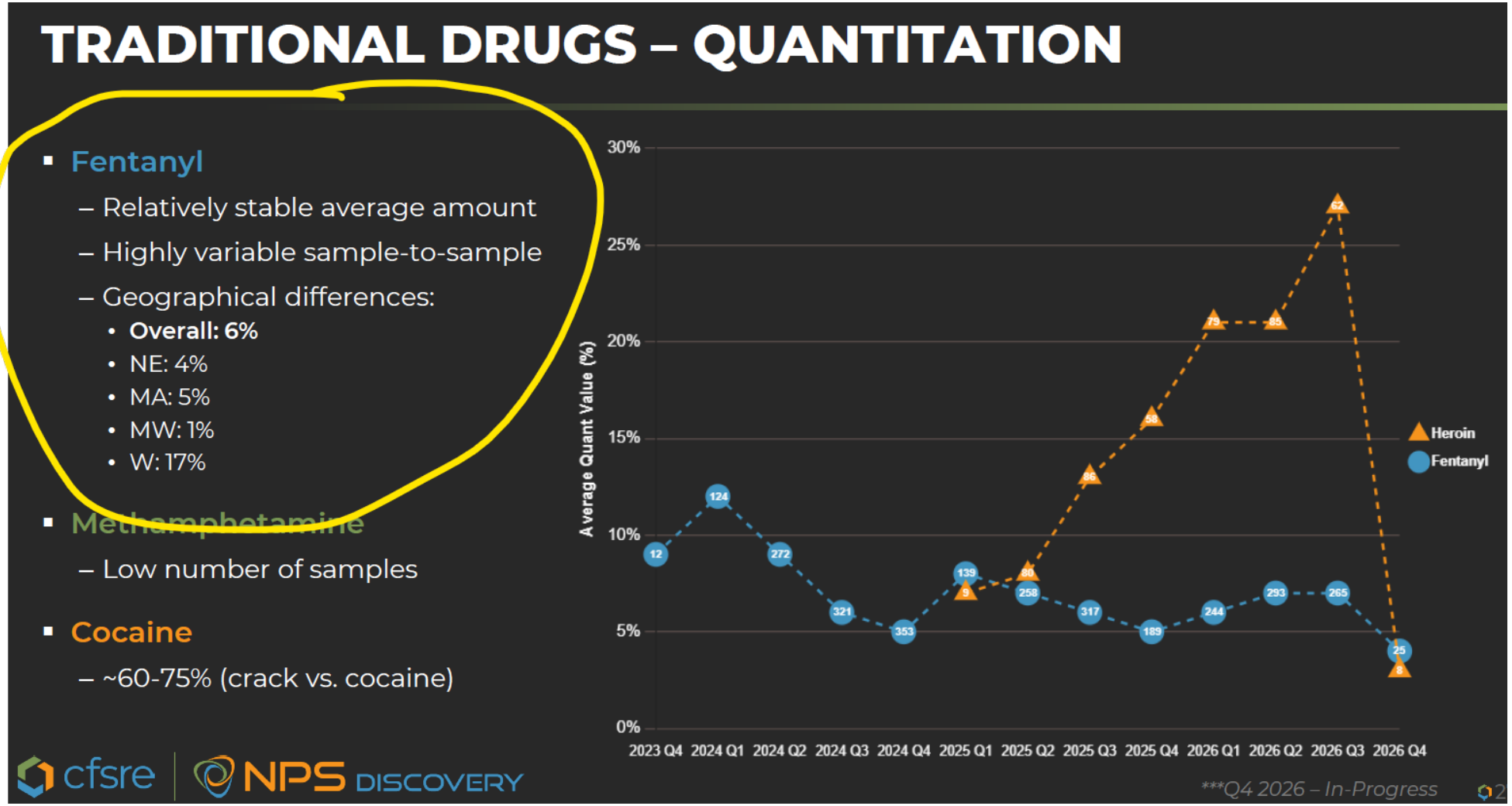
-12.7

Based on data available for analysis on: **October 4th, 2026**

National Center for Health Statistics, Provisional Drug Overdose Death Counts

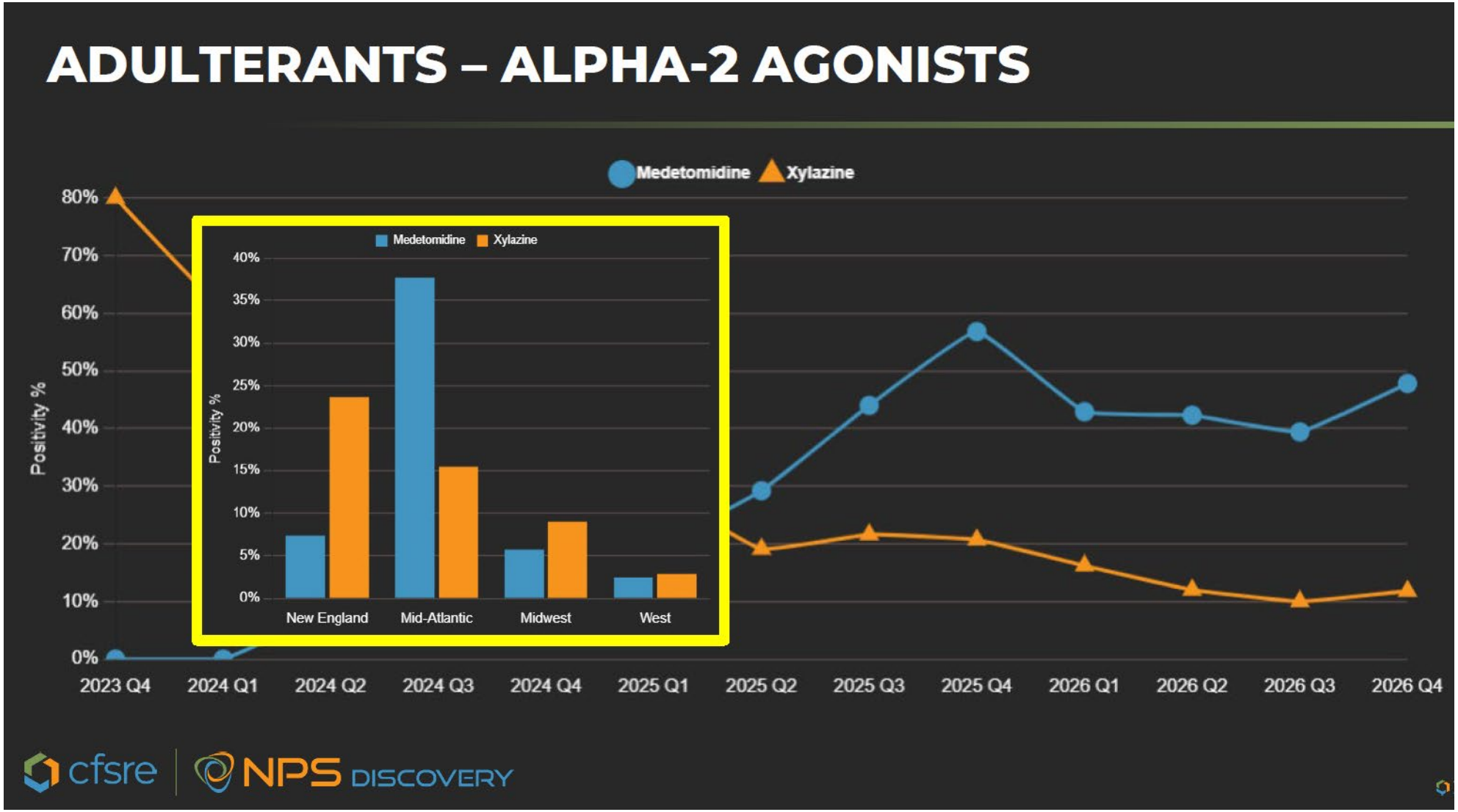
NATIONAL CURRENT DRUG LANDSCAPE

Fentanyl purity varies sharply by region and has not steadily declined. Average fentanyl purity in CFSRE (Center for Forensic Science Research & Education) samples is ~ 6% nationally: roughly 17% in the West, 4–5% in New England and the Mid-Atlantic, 1% in the Midwest.



NATIONAL CURRENT DRUG LANDSCAPE

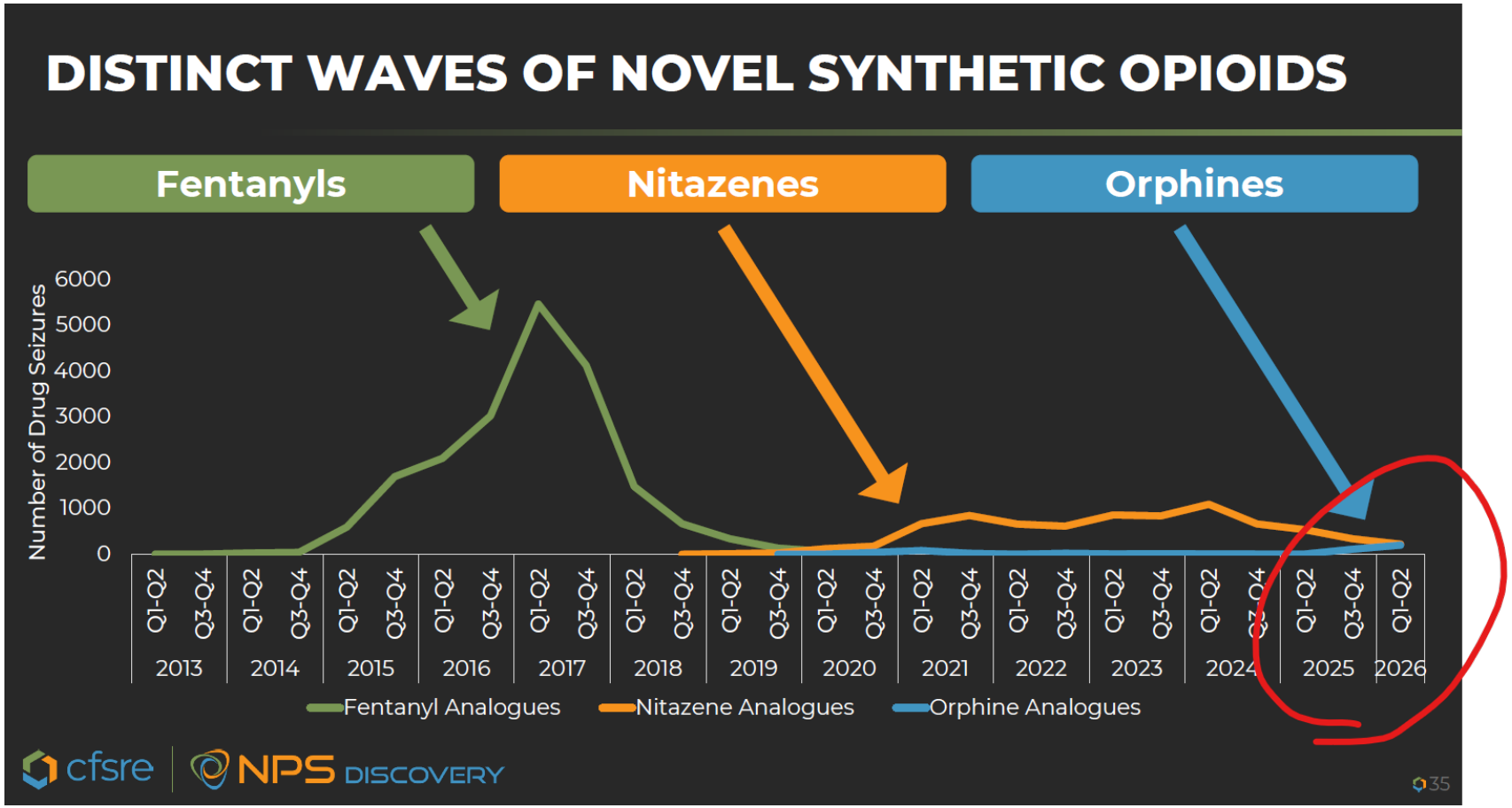
Medetomidine is now more common than xylazine, driven by the Mid-Atlantic. Medetomidine appeared in roughly 40% of fentanyl samples in 2026, versus about 10% for xylazine.



NATIONAL CURRENT DRUG LANDSCAPE

Orphines spread rapidly following China's class-wide scheduling of nitazenes in July 2025. The leading orphine, cychlorphine, appeared in CFSRE cases from half of U.S. states within three to six months.

By Q3 2026, orphines were detected about as often as nitazenes, and CFSRE had identified them in 231 death investigations, led by Tennessee (71), Texas (43), and Illinois (27). China scheduled orphines as a class in October 2026.



NATIONAL CURRENT DRUG LANDSCAPE
Kratom Alkaloid Market

- Kratom products have evolved through several "generations." These alkaloids now appear in many forms including pills, powders, gummies, and drinks.
    - The market moved from plant kratom (mitragynine) to concentrated 7-OH (7-Hydroxy mitragynine) in 2023-2024.
    - In 2025, it shifted to MP (mitragynine pseudoindoxyl) and MGM-15 (dihydro-7-hydroxymitragynine)
- Testing gaps mean these deaths are undercounted. CFSRE has identified MGM-15 in deaths from 11 states. **Few toxicology labs test for these alkaloids**.
- Product labels don't always match what's inside.
- Federal controls are expected soon, but the market will likely keep shifting.
- New "13-OH" and "kratom + nootropics" products are already appearing, and mushroom products containing novel tryptamines are growing rapidly.

QUESTIONS?

Link to register for future ORS TAT Webinars:
ORS TAT Webinar Series Registration Link

APPENDIX



Nov2026 ORSTAT Summary



Nov2026 ORSTAT Slides