

National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) Study of Illicit Drug Exposure in Forensic Science Workers

What are Illicit Drugs?

- Illicit drugs are drugs that have been prohibited in the United States and are controlled both by the Federal and all 50 state governments.
- Illicit drugs in this research study will be cocaine, methamphetamine, and opioids (fentanyl and heroin).

Why is NIOSH studying illicit drugs in workers?

- Illicit drugs exposure in the workplace may impact worker's health. Symptoms that can result from illicit drug exposures could include lightheadedness, drowsiness, nausea, vomiting, or be fatal and can create the need for medical attention and prevent workers from performing their duties as needed.
- Workers that handle illicit drugs are likely routinely exposed to low levels of illicit drugs and there is little understanding of potential health effects from these routine low-dose exposures.

What are the objectives of this study?

- NIOSH would like to know more about the range of illicit drug exposures occurring in US workplaces.
- Findings from this study will be used to 1) identify worker tasks and processes associated with elevated illicit drug exposures and 2) determine ways to reduce illicit drug exposures in the workplace.

What will NIOSH be collecting?

- NIOSH researchers will collect air, surface wipes, handwipes, and urine samples at all selected work sites and samples will be analyzed for cocaine, fentanyl, heroin, methamphetamine.
- NIOSH researchers will conduct a questionnaire that will ask about medical history, exposures, and perceived health effects.

Who is eligible for this study?

- To participate in this study, workers must be adults, work in a law enforcement forensic science division, and regularly handle illicit drugs.

What is NIOSH?

The National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) is a multidisciplinary research institute of the government. NIOSH is part of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) under the Department of Health and Human Services.

Will participants receive their study results?

Yes, study participants will have the option of receiving their individual study results. Results will be sent within 1 year of the site visit.

How will this research be used?

The results from this study will be:

- Communicated to the public
- Used to inform future research into illicit drug exposure and health
- Assist in the development of best practices for how to manage and reduce exposures to illicit drugs

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