

VERMONT STATE POLICE

NARCOTICS INVESTIGATION UNIT / VERMONT DRUG TASK FORCE

Current Strategy

2016

Vermont continues to see increased heroin/opiate distribution efforts by out-of-state sources. These sources utilize Vermont residents to assist in their distribution efforts by providing the following services;

- Transportation
- Lodging /base of operations
- Introduction to area traffickers and consumers
- Co-conspirators who assist with importation and distribution of heroin/opiate product

In return for these services, Vermont residents typically receive product at a discounted rate, product fronted prior to payment, and/or product given to sell at a certain rate, and are allowed to keep any profit above that amount. For the out-of-state source, the above services allow him/her to operate successfully in Vermont without additional resources. In an effort to combat this we have made the following adjustments to our approach;

- Increased cooperation/prosecution from both state and federal entities that focus on those that provide the above described services to the out-of-state sources. Specifically, in 2015 the US Attorney's office adopted a "quadrant" approach to prosecutor assignment that mirrors the existing Task Force model (NW, NE, SW, SE). Each unit works with one federal prosecutor, and shares information and case direction during weekly conference calls with all LE and prosecutorial parties involved.
- Increased partnership with federal agencies has allowed the Vermont Drug Task Force (VDTF) to work more effectively with those parties. We now have FBI and HSI agents that work almost entirely on VDTF cases, and liaison where needed to facilitate case direction and execution. This partnership has bled over to major crime investigations, which also benefit from the improved relationships.
- Increased partnership with local agencies has led to municipal agencies assigning investigators to the VDTF on a short term basis to learn the basics of drug investigation in VT. During this time period (usually 3-6 months) the local agencies continues to pay for the investigators salary, and that investigator undergoes an intensive training program within the VDTF. Upon successful conclusion of that assignment the local investigator returns to his/her agency, fully capable of running safe, prosecutable sale cases. The VDTF supports those investigations with supervision, surveillance personal

and buy money; and as a result has increased the number of investigators doing proactive opiate investigations in the state. This program has been very effective, and is popular among local law enforcement agencies.

- Comprehensive investigation strategies that target the three levels of distribution:
 1. 3rd tier – Smaller amounts generally sold by addicts to addicts. The goal of these investigations is usually court-assisted treatment, information for future criminal investigations and public exposure to the opiate issue.
 2. 2nd tier – Currently the largest problem in VT, the mid-level VT-based dealer is responsible for providing the infrastructure for the larger dealers to operate successfully in VT. The goal of these investigations is to disrupt that infrastructure and expose the larger sources of supply.
 3. Top tier – The end game for most investigations, the top tier targets are investigated and taken into custody (when possible) only after the preceding tiers have been identified, and are facing pending charges themselves.

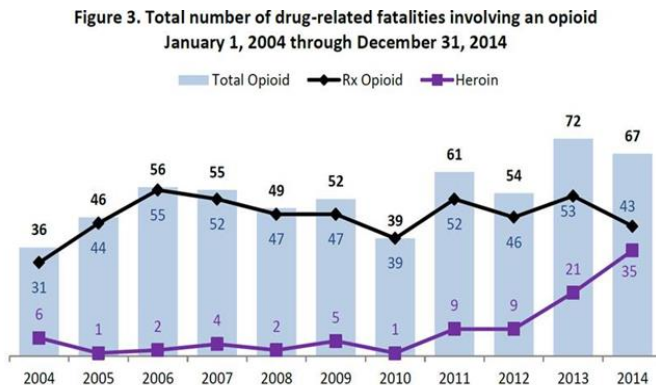
In this manner, the VDTF has been successful in dismantling distribution efforts in many regions throughout the state. Because the state has so many residents who are willing to take part in 2nd tier activities, this approach requires constant pressure by the VDTF.

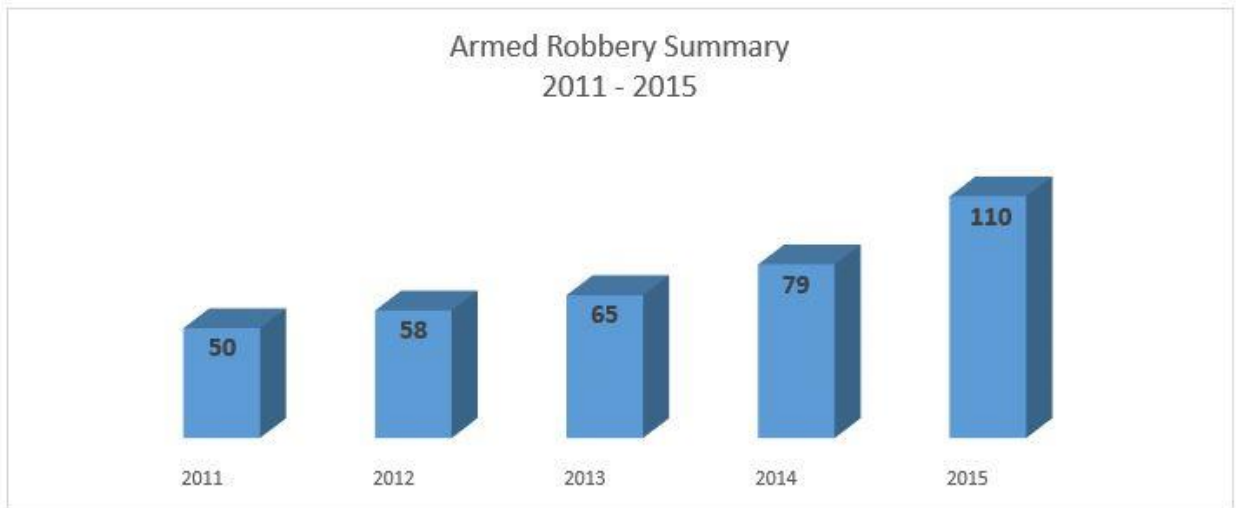
Significant statistics for Vermont

VERMONT HEROIN AND OPIOID TREATMENT RATES

	2012	2013	2014
Rates per 100,000 population of primary treatment admission for heroin	146	219	370
Rates per 100,000 population of primary treatment admission for other opioids	410	426	495

Source: VT Department of Health, 2015 data not yet available





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