



Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center **Annual Report** **2025**



CONTENTS

ONIC’s Impact: Two Perspectives, One Mission	4
Letter from the ONIC Executive Director	5
ONIC Overview	6
2025 ONIC Accomplishments	8
Criminal Case Support	8
Law Enforcement Collaboration	14
Violent Crime Reduction Initiative	14
Ohio National Guard Counterdrug Program	14
Hamilton County Heroin Task Force Cold Case Review Panel	14
Crime Gun Intelligence Centers	15
Cryptocurrency and Digital Crime Support	15
Public Health Collaboration	16
RecoveryOhio	16
Operation BRIDGE	16
Information Sharing	17
ONIC Strategic Report	17
ONIC Intelligence Bulletins	17
Conferences and Hosted Trainings	18
Notable Speaking Engagements	20
Information Sharing Calls	21
Public Awareness	21
ONIC Staff Development	24
2025 All-Staff Training	24
Forensics Certifications	24
Subject Matter Expert Certification	24
Internship Program	25
Clifton Strengths Training	25

Awards and Recognition.....	25
Patriot Award.....	25
IALEIA Professional Service Award.....	26
U.S. Secret Service Top Forensic Examiner.....	26
Hamilton County Police Association’s Clarence “Cid” Caesar Award.....	26
Customer Feedback.....	27
2026 Outlook.....	28
ONIC Law Enforcement Drug Summit.....	28
ONIC Cryptocurrency Conference.....	28
Drug Education Webpage.....	28
Expanded Engagement.....	28
ONIC Website and Social Media.....	29

ONIC'S IMPACT: TWO PERSPECTIVES, ONE MISSION



Prosecution Perspective

"As an Assistant Prosecutor, I seek out Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center (ONIC) support because they are experts at analyzing digital evidence. Their help is extremely valuable in building solid, evidence-based cases. Most of our investigations now include data from phones and social media that require technical review. ONIC has the tools and skills to sort through that information and turn it into clear visuals that make sense to a jury. Their work helps me present stronger cases and seek justice more efficiently."

The ONIC has provided countless resources and services including digital extractions, social media analysis, mapping analysis, expert testimony and final case products. Those resources were key to organizing and explaining complex evidence.

The ONIC's support has directly helped the outcome of my cases by turning complex digital evidence into clear, usable information. Their analysis of phone data, social media, and location mapping has helped establish timelines, confirm communications between defendants, and place individuals at key locations. This evidence strengthened witness testimony and gave the jury a clear picture of the events, which has ultimately led to more successful convictions."

–Assistant Prosecuting Attorney, Clark County Prosecutor's Office



Investigation Perspective

"I sought out the help of ONIC for multiple reasons. As law enforcement, many steps are to be considered when investigating a case, and one of the most important steps is prosecution. Not only does your agency provide vital investigative help, it also provides vital in-depth breakdowns of said evidence as a visual aid. This visual aid helps the jury consider all the evidence in the case, as well as the defense, to understand the impact of the evidence against them. The help provided by ONIC analysts also takes some of the workload off the investigator, so they can place more time into the field when processing physical evidence, as well as interviews, etc."

The investigation in question involved two separate cases, that at face value, were very different but were ultimately connected. With the assistance of [the ONIC intelligence analyst], I was able to connect the dots to the drug case and the assault. I spent hours reviewing the phones and their relative phone dumps, but I missed multiple key pieces of evidence that [the analyst] was able to find and place into the work product (PowerPoint).

I believe that the outcome of the case was directly connected to the hard and dedicated work that [the analyst] put into the investigation. All parties in the investigation were convicted and are now serving their sentences without having to burden the courts with a lengthy trial. The assistance provided by your agency is unmatched, and we look forward to future assistance."

–Detective, Belmont County Sheriff's Office

LETTER FROM THE OHIO NARCOTICS INTELLIGENCE CENTER EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Ohio has seen a significant decline in unintentional drug poisoning (overdose) deaths from 2022 to 2024 — down more than nine percent from 2022 to 2023, with preliminary Ohio Department of Health (ODH) data showing an additional 35 percent drop in 2024 — marking a period of meaningful progress. This progress reflects the tireless efforts of professionals across Ohio, including those in law enforcement, public health, mental health, prevention, recovery, and education, as well as the expanded use of harm-reduction tools like naloxone, fentanyl test strips, and treatment access.

Yet, the threat continues to evolve. Drug traffickers are constantly adapting, creating new substances and dangerous polydrug mixtures that target vulnerable populations. Sustained progress will require continued innovation, intelligence sharing, and strong cross-sector collaboration.

Under Governor Mike DeWine’s leadership, ONIC is taking an intelligence-driven approach to disrupt drug supply chains and reduce drug poisoning deaths. Through rapid communication, advanced analytics, and strong partnerships, ONIC is helping detect and intercept emerging threats — and keeping the public informed.

This year’s Annual Report highlights ONIC’s impact: dismantling major narcotics operations, monitoring and supporting the scheduling of emerging drugs, identifying and overcoming challenges in digital forensics, contributing to violent crime reduction efforts, publishing six intelligence bulletins and a strategic report, delivering 132 presentations and hosting major events, including our inaugural Cryptocurrency Conference and annual Drug Summit with more than 500 attendees. We also invested in staff development through wellness, resilience, and leadership training.

At ONIC, we are driven by a shared purpose — to protect lives, uplift communities, and create a safer future for all Ohioans. As we look ahead to 2026, we remain inspired by the progress we’ve made and the partnerships that make it possible. Together, we will continue to rise to the challenge, innovate with purpose, and lead with compassion in the fight against illicit narcotics. The road ahead is long, but our resolve is strong — and our mission has never been more important.

Cynthia S. Peterman

Executive Director, Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center





Mission

Ohio Narcotics Intelligence Center (ONIC) provides expert digital forensics examinations, criminal intelligence analysis, and case support for Ohio law enforcement to identify and disrupt the illicit drug market. ONIC facilitates information sharing and collaboration with law enforcement, addiction services, recovery organizations, and the public to reduce drug poisoning deaths.

ONIC OVERVIEW

ONIC was established in 2019 by Governor Mike DeWine in Executive Order 2019-20D and formally codified as a division of the Ohio Department of Public Safety (DPS) in July 2023. ONIC has been directed by the Ohio State Legislature and the Governor of Ohio to accomplish certain requirements of House Bill No. 33 Section 5502.69 (A), pursuant to its mission of providing intelligence analysis and digital forensics support to law enforcement agencies across Ohio. Requirements stipulated in the codification include:

1

Coordinate law enforcement response to illegal drug activities for state agencies and act as a liaison between state agencies and local entities for the purposes of communicating counter-drug policy initiatives.

2

Collect, analyze, maintain, and disseminate information to support local, state, and federal law enforcement agencies, other government agencies, and private organizations in detecting, deterring, preventing, preparing for, prosecuting, and responding to illegal drug activities.

3

Develop and coordinate policies, protocols, and strategies that may be used by local, state, and private organizations to detect, deter, prevent, prepare for, prosecute, and respond to illegal drug activities.

4

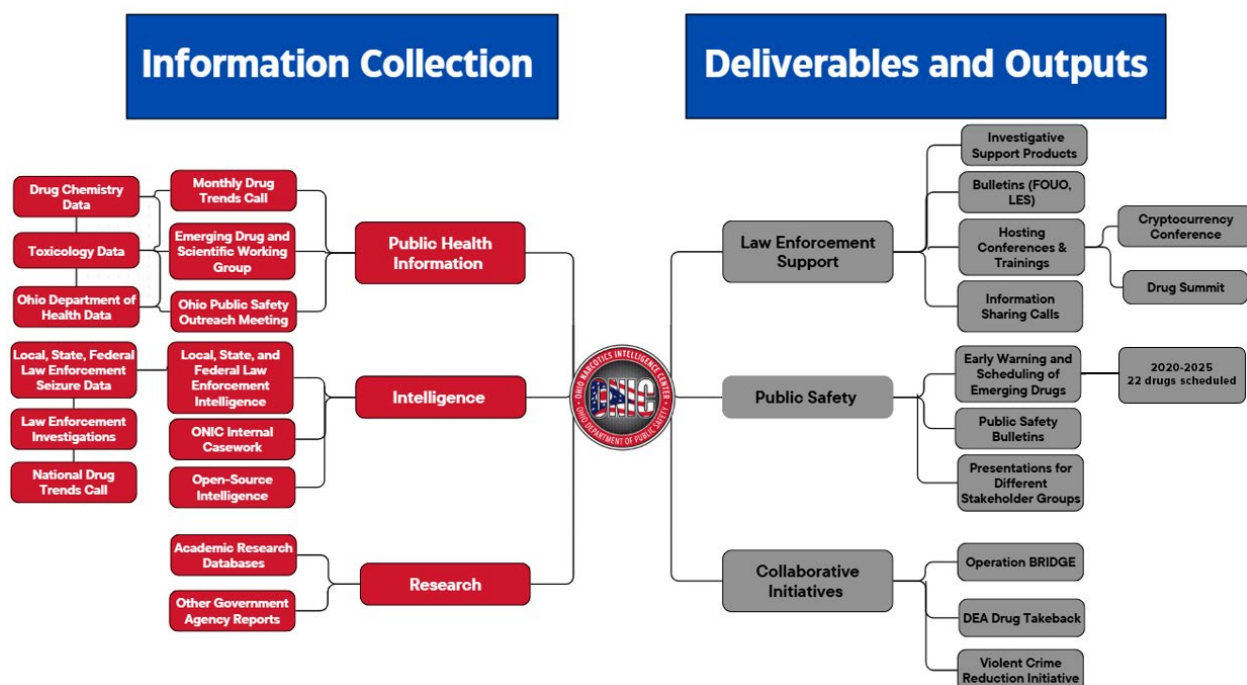
Develop, update, and coordinate the implementation of an Ohio drug control strategy to guide state and local governments and public agencies.

ONIC operates as a division of Ohio DPS with offices in Columbus, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Toledo. ONIC offices are comprised of forensic computer specialists and public safety intelligence analysts who assist law enforcement agencies and drug task forces by providing investigative and case support.

ONIC Forensics Unit supports law enforcement, drug task forces, and local, state, and federal agencies through the extraction and analysis of cell phones, computers, digital video recorder (DVR) systems, security systems, and other electronic devices. All four ONIC locations are equipped with state-of-the-art digital forensic tools, enabling law enforcement to overcome evolving digital challenges and keep pace with the changing technological landscape by accessing crucial digital evidence for their cases.

ONIC Intelligence Unit provides tactical and operational criminal case support with assistance for cryptocurrency tracing and dark web investigations, Spanish translation, forensic accounting, drug-related violent crime (DRVC) case support, and strategic intelligence support. ONIC intelligence analysts utilize complex analytical tools to locate connections within and beyond jurisdictions, determine links between cases, uncover trends, and dismantle criminal networks.

ONIC acts as a clearinghouse receiving, analyzing, and disseminating information. This information collection infrastructure has directly contributed to an enhanced understanding of the illicit drug supply and emerging drug threats across different sectors and has been a key facet of Ohio's proactive response to the evolving drug environment. ONIC leverages many information and data streams to identify emerging drugs, keep stakeholders and the public informed, and assist in getting drugs scheduled as controlled substances when necessary.



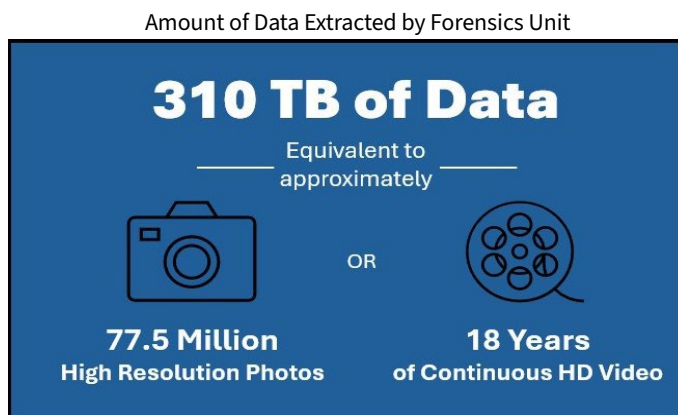
ONIC 2025 ACCOMPLISHMENTS

2025 ONIC Forensics & Intelligence Support	
Forensics	Intelligence
Total Cases Supported: 1,654	Requests for Assistance: 995
Total Devices Submitted: 3,252	Workups Provided: 900
Total Examinations Conducted: 5,025	Tips/Leads Worked: 106
Total Law Enforcement Agencies Assisted: 276 Ohio Drug Task Forces: 46% Local Agencies: 45% Federal Agencies: 7% State Agencies: 1% Prosecutor's Offices: <1%	Total Law Enforcement Agencies Assisted: 226 Local Agencies: 47% Ohio Drug Task Forces: 35% Federal Agencies: 14% State Agencies: <1% Prosecutor's Offices: <1% Out-of-State Agencies: <1%
Presentations to Stakeholders: 132 Intelligence Bulletins Published: 6	

Criminal Case Support

ONIC continues to address and manage the demands of growing digital footprints created by rapid technological advancements. In 2025, ONIC Forensics Unit extracted approximately 310 terabytes (TB) of data. As a reference point, one TB is roughly equivalent to the storage capacity of 250,000 high-resolution photos or more than 500 hours of High Definition (HD) video. Meanwhile, ONIC intelligence analysts were provided more than 2.2

million calls and 24.9 million messages to review. This data was provided back to customers in readable and digestable formats to advance criminal investigations, charge individuals in crimes, and use for court purposes. In 2025, ONIC had at least 148 cases result in convictions across the state.



Combined 28-Year Sentence

12 Pounds of Narcotics Mailed Through U.S. Postal Service

The United States Postal Inspection Service (USPIS) requested ONIC Forensics support with a drug trafficking investigation following a controlled delivery of a United States Postal Service (USPS) package containing 10 pounds of methamphetamine and more than two pounds of fentanyl pills. One of the intended package recipients was arrested, and three devices were seized and extracted by ONIC Forensics. Following the ONIC forensic examiner's testimony, Terrance Rucker was found guilty and sentenced to 23 years in prison with five years of supervised release on the following charges: conspiracy to possess with intent to distribute controlled substances, attempted possession with intent to distribute methamphetamine, and attempted possession with intent to distribute fentanyl. Javay Cox was found guilty and sentenced to more than five years in prison and three years of supervised release.

“

I submitted the devices to ONIC because I had previously used ONIC for other forensic assistance, which had positive results. Other agencies indicate they are unable to unlock or extract data from locked devices (iPhones), but ONIC has a high success rate. ONIC provided digital device extractions for several cellular phones and two analysts testified about the extraction process during the federal trial. The evidence extracted from the devices contributed to the successful prosecution, which was a finding of guilty by the jury. – Inspector, United States Postal Inspection Service

Combined 22–27.5-Year Sentence

Two Fatal Drug Poisonings

Mentor Police Department requested ONIC Forensics assistance in a fatal drug poisoning investigation. ONIC Forensics successfully extracted data from six devices that ultimately held evidence that supported the prosecution of Tyrese Johnson. Johnson, who had prior convictions for violent crimes, drug possession, and drug trafficking, was aware of the victims' deaths, but continued selling drugs for several months afterward. Johnson pled guilty to two counts of involuntary manslaughter and was sentenced to 22–27.5 years in prison.

15-Year Sentence

Fatal Drug Poisoning

Hamilton County Heroin Task Force (HCHTF), in partnership with Mason Police Department, requested ONIC Forensics and Intelligence support on the joint investigation into a fatal drug poisoning. ONIC Forensics successfully extracted data from a single device, which was then analyzed by an ONIC intelligence analyst, along with location data. The ONIC analyst used the available data to highlight the victim's communications with and travel to Maurice Stewart's location for the assessed drug transaction, which was corroborated by video surveillance. Stewart, a local chef in the Cincinnati area, allegedly sold pills to his coworkers while at work or to customers directly outside the restaurant. Stewart later pled guilty and was sentenced federally to 15 years for distribution of fentanyl resulting in the death of another.

Case Spotlight: Drug-Related Homicide

In 2022, Franklin County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) and the Franklin County Prosecutor's Office requested ONIC Forensics and Intelligence assistance with a drug trafficking investigation against Eric Ward and the homicide of Allyson Lorenz. ONIC Forensics extracted six digital devices, which were reviewed by ONIC Intelligence, along with four social media returns. The ONIC analyst produced a report outlining Ward's drug trafficking activity, and the events leading up to, and following Lorenz's death, including a pattern of Ward's violent behavior towards Lorenz and another female homicide suspect.



Ward's sentencing hearing at the Franklin County Common Pleas Court

Following the analyst's expert testimony during trial, the jury found Eric Ward guilty of a wide range of serious offenses, including aggravated murder, multiple counts of murder, and kidnapping—all with repeat violent offender specifications. Ward was also convicted of domestic violence, tampering with evidence, gross abuse of a corpse, numerous drug trafficking and possession charges with major drug offender specifications, and multiple weapons violations. During the sentencing hearing, the judge stated, "I believe you have shown through your actions all these years that you are not fit for society, you can't follow society's rules... The court finds this to be the most horrible set of circumstances when it comes to the disregard for human life."

In 2025, Ward was sentenced to life in prison without the opportunity for parole, plus an additional 74–79.5 years in prison.

Additionally, ONIC provided intelligence that aided in prosecution's proffer with the other female suspect who was also a victim of Ward's violence. As a part of her plea, she was ordered to participate in Franklin County Common Pleas Court's CATCH Court, which is a specialized docket that provides resources and community to women who have experienced the cycle of abuse.

“

...This investigation was at a standstill and our office reached out to ONIC for assistance in reviewing digital evidence to help track down witnesses and then analyze the many devices collected in this investigation. The help from [ONIC] during the investigation helped this case go from a stalled investigation to an indictment and then to trial and conviction. The [intelligence analyst] who assisted with this investigation was helpful in putting together a product for trial that supported the evidence that we presented over a six-day trial. The jury was impressed with how that evidence was gathered and presented to them during the trial. I was also able to use the product provided by the ONIC [...] to cross examine the defendant when he chose to take the stand. Without the help of ONIC this case might not have had the successful conclusion that it did at trial. During the preparation for trial, we went back and forth several times deciding what evidence to present to the jury and [the ONIC] was available to help every time we called. Thanks to the help of many agencies who worked to put this case together, the defendant will spend life in prison without the possibility of parole, plus an additional 74–79 ½ years in prison and the victim's family can have peace knowing their daughter's killer has been brought to justice.

– Grand Jury Unit Director, Franklin County Prosecutor's Office

19–24.5-Year Sentence

Coast-to-Coast Prison Drug Trafficking

An ONIC intelligence analyst supported a complex drug trafficking investigation for the Delaware County Drug Task Force (DCDTF) that spanned from Ohio to California and involved Spanish communications across 11 different prisons. As a result of the investigation, six individuals pled guilty to charges including, but not limited to, attempted engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity and aggravated trafficking, resulting in a 19–24.5 year sentence for the main suspect, with additional pleas expected. The ONIC analyst translated the Spanish communications and uncovered critical evidence in multiple phone extractions, according to the task force. Their contributions were described as “crucial” to the investigation, with the task force emphasizing that the visual aids produced by ONIC were instrumental in “connecting all the dots” and building a comprehensive case.

“

I have used ONIC several times since taking the position as a detective with the DCDTF. Their work product has been exceptional each time [...] ONIC's reputation has continued to grow rapidly in the four years I have been a detective with the DCDTF. I look forward to working with the ONIC in the future.
– Detective, Delaware County Law Enforcement Against Pushers (L.E.A.P) Drug Task Force

16–19-Year Sentence

Two Counts of Involuntary Manslaughter

Brown County Drug and Major Crime Task Force requested ONIC Forensics and Intelligence assistance on two fatal drug poisonings. ONIC Forensics successfully extracted two devices and an ONIC analyst reviewed these devices and produced a court-ready intelligence product. The analyst identified Brian Barnett as the source of the drugs that caused the fatal drug poisonings. Barnett was found guilty by jury and sentenced to 16–19 years in prison, including two years for violating parole for two counts of involuntary manslaughter, six counts of corrupting another with drugs, aggravated trafficking in drugs, and trafficking in a fentanyl-related compound. The chief deputy for the case shared that, “The information provided from ONIC was essential to the conviction of Mr. Barnett.” He also stated that the ONIC staff, “are always a joy to work with on submissions, and I cannot thank them enough for all the assistance on the cases we’ve reached out to them on.”

7 Defendants and a Combined 24 Years Sentenced

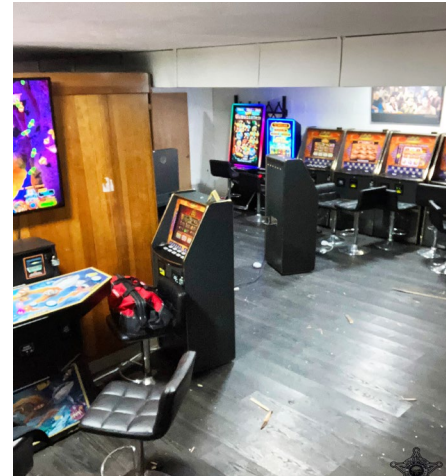
Ohio and Michigan Car Theft Ring

ONIC Forensics and Intelligence provided support to the Multi-Area Narcotics Task Force in a case involving drug trafficking and a car theft ring. ONIC Forensics extracted data from 11 devices, which was then analyzed by ONIC Intelligence, along with location data and video analysis for seven suspects. As a result of the analysis, Fulton County indicted five adults and two juveniles from a Michigan-based group stealing vehicles throughout Michigan and Ohio. At the time of their arrests, one suspect was found with a bulk quantity of narcotics. All seven defendants accepted plea agreements, with charges including engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity, burglary, and weapons under disability, resulting in a combined 24 years in prison for the five adults — Robert Adams, Christopher Calhoun, R. James Freiburger, R. Leo Freiburger, and Kemonie Williams — and three years of community control for each juvenile.

More than \$516,000 in Cryptocurrency Seized

Illegal Gambling Operation

ONIC, as part of the Columbus Cyber Narcotics Joint Task Force, received a request for support from the Franklin County Sheriff's Office (FCSO) to enable the seizure of cryptocurrency related to a drug trafficking organization (DTO) in Westerville, Ohio. The DTO was selling methamphetamine and running an illegal gambling operation out of a residence and business. Authorities seized multiple ledger cold storage devices, as well as phones and laptops with multiple software wallets. An ONIC Dark-CI analyst assisted with analyzing ledger devices resulting in more than \$516,000 in cryptocurrency assets being seized and one arrest made. This seizure marks FCSO's first-ever cryptocurrency seizure.



Illegal gambling operation discovered during the investigation

18-Year Federal Conviction

Multi-State Pill Mill Scheme

The Noble County Sheriff's Office requested ONIC Forensics assistance in a drug poisoning investigation involving multiple digital devices. Digital forensic extractions revealed links to a much larger, multi-state case spanning at least 45 states. The investigation centered on Dr. Ndubuisi Joseph Okafor, a Maryland-based doctor who was illegally prescribing medications across state lines. An ONIC forensic examiner provided expert testimony in federal court in Washington, D.C., offering critical digital evidence and case support. This contribution helped secure a conviction and 18-year federal prison sentence for Okafor, who was found guilty of multiple drug-related offenses, including conspiracy to distribute controlled substances, maintaining a drug-involved premises, and 22 counts of unlawful distribution.

Combined 39–40.5-Year Sentence and Forfeiture of Illicit Proceeds

Cocaine and Fentanyl Trafficking

The Jefferson County Drug Task Force requested ONIC Forensics and Intelligence assistance on a cocaine and fentanyl trafficking case. ONIC Forensics successfully extracted 12 devices and an ONIC analyst reviewed these devices and produced an intelligence product. The product provided evidence of the involvement of Cherie Nelson and her co-defendants. Nelson was sentenced to up to 10.5 years in prison with a mandatory nine years for trafficking drugs and using a firearm during the commission of the crimes. Nelson also forfeited \$1,430 in cash and a 1997 Jeep Wrangler, both deemed proceeds of her illicit drug dealings, as well as a gun. She is required to pay a \$10,000 fine and will be on community control upon release from custody. Nelson's co-defendants, Lavocni Brown and Lionel Lindsey, were previously sentenced to 16 years and 14 years in prison, respectively. In total, 13 individuals have been charged with criminal offenses related to this investigation.

Four Defendants Sentenced to Combined 70–92.5 Years

Drug Trafficking Organization

In May 2025, the last defendant in a drug trafficking investigation led by the Springfield Police Division (SPD) was sentenced for his role in a DTO. In 2021, SPD requested ONIC Intelligence support regarding a drug trafficking investigation. The ONIC analyst identified multiple overlaps with other ongoing drug investigations throughout Ohio, including a drug poisoning investigation. The analyst provided location, call, social media, and digital device analysis. Throughout the investigation, a pill press, fentanyl, and additional drug items were seized. Ariel Bush accepted a plea deal of 20–29.5 years in 2025 for engaging in a pattern of corrupt activity, trafficking, and weapons under disability. Two other co-defendants in this case were previously convicted and sentenced in 2023: Asia Knott received a prison term of 11–16.5 years, while Richard Blankenship was sentenced to 34–40 years. Additionally, Todd Frye accepted a plea deal for 5–6.5 years in prison for his role. In total, DTO members were sentenced to a combined 70–92.5 years in prison.



Narcotics seized during the investigation

48–52-Year Sentence

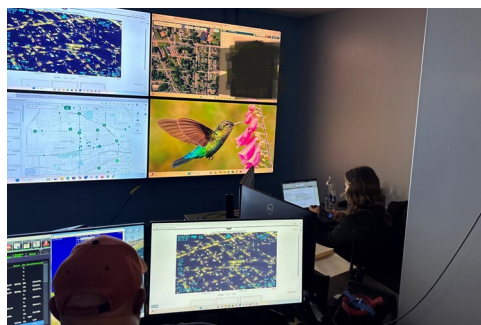
Crimes Against a Minor

Lucas County Sheriff's Office requested ONIC forensic support on a case involving crimes against a minor. While physical evidence was lacking in this case, ONIC Forensics was able to provide essential evidence for prosecution using specialized software and digital forensics tools. As a result, suspect Jason Sweet was convicted on multiple charges, including four counts of pandering obscenity involving a minor, five counts of pandering sexually-oriented material involving a minor, and four counts of illegal use of a minor in nudity-oriented material or performance. Sweet was sentenced to 48–52 years in prison.

LAW ENFORCEMENT COLLABORATION

Violent Crime Reduction Initiative

In 2025, Governor DeWine implemented the Violent Crime Reduction Initiative (VCRI) to provide personnel and other resources to support 130 coordinated violent crime reduction operations in 23 communities. ONIC supported multiple agencies by reviewing digital evidence, social media, incident reports, and National Integrated Ballistic Information Network (NIBIN) reports to deliver intelligence that highlighted connections between cases and repeat violent offenders for interdiction units. In total, statewide operations led to 521 felony arrests, the confiscation of 175 illegally possessed firearms, various drug seizures, and the recovery of stolen vehicles. ONIC will continue to support the VCRI into 2026.



Analysts working in Dayton's Real-Time Crime Center



Governor DeWine announces Dayton VCRI alongside local, state, and federal partner agency leaders

Ohio National Guard (ONG) Counterdrug Program

ONG Counterdrug analysts are embedded with ONIC and work closely with law enforcement customers to provide criminal intelligence products. In 2025, the ONG Counterdrug analysts provided support on 77 law enforcement cases including drug poisoning, drug trafficking, and drug-related violent crime investigations.

Hamilton County Heroin Task Force Cold Case Review Panel

ONIC serves as a voting member on the HCHTF Cold Case Review Panel, contributing both intelligence and forensic expertise. The panel's mission is to support families impacted by the opioid crisis, identify intervention opportunities to prevent future deaths, and strengthen evidence-based practices through collaboration with data analysts from the University of Cincinnati. ONIC Intelligence and Forensics provides guidance on evidence collection, investigative and prosecutorial needs, and the re-processing of evidence using new or updated analytical tools.

Crime Gun Intelligence Centers (CGIC)

ONIC supports CGIC missions by providing digital forensic support and intelligence analysis to assist investigators working firearm-related cases. The Northeast and Central Ohio CGICs are collaborative efforts involving analysts, law enforcement, and prosecutors. ONIC's contributions have directly supported arrests in homicide, aggravated robbery, and weapons violations cases. Below is a summary of ONIC support during a CGIC investigation:



ONIC, as part of the Central Ohio CGIC, provided intelligence support to the Franklin County Prosecutor's Office on a 2022 homicide investigation that occurred in Columbus, Ohio. ONIC's analyst worked alongside Central Ohio CGIC analysts from the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigations, Ohio State Highway Patrol (OSHP), and Columbus Division of Police, to analyze digital evidence, communication records, and ballistic evidence to provide crucial intelligence identifying and linking individuals to the homicide. Two individuals, who were juveniles at the time of the offense, pled guilty in November 2025 and were sentenced in Franklin County Common Pleas Court. Taywan Gavin was sentenced to 25 years in prison for two counts of aggravated robbery, involuntary manslaughter with a three-year firearm specification, and felonious assault with a three-year firearm specification. Jebrelle McClendon was sentenced to 21 years to life in prison for two counts of aggravated robbery, and murder with a three-year firearm specification.

Cryptocurrency and Digital Organized Crime Support

ONIC analysts embedded with federal and local task forces provide specialized expertise in cryptocurrency tracing, digital forensics, and dark web investigations to combat drug trafficking and money laundering. Through partnerships with the Federal Bureau of Investigation's (FBI) Southern Ohio Digital Organized Crimes Group (SODOC-G) and Cleveland Cartel Gang Narcotics & Laundering (CGNL) Task Force, as well as the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA)-led Columbus Cyber Narcotics Joint Task Force (CNJTF), ONIC delivers investigative support, target development, and forensic analysis. These efforts help disrupt illicit online activities tied to narcotics and financial crimes. Below is a summary of ONIC support during a CNJTF investigation:



The DEA requested ONIC assistance for a cyber-related narcotics investigation. An ONIC analyst accompanied the CNJTF and multiple partner agencies to Denver, Colorado, for a coordinated enforcement into a dark web vendor operating a large-scale distribution network throughout the United States. The operation netted three arrests and the seizure of more than 67 kilograms of controlled substances, including an estimated 126,000+ pills. Agents restored a total of 37 cryptocurrency wallets and seized funds from 16 with an estimated total value of more than \$507,000. Regarding ONIC's assistance, the DEA officer commented:

"This team continues to make major case after major case with national level impact. [ONIC's] digital asset tracing and other work was critical to the success of this case. He really did an outstanding job..."

PUBLIC HEALTH COLLABORATION

RecoveryOhio

RecoveryOhio is a statewide initiative that coordinates Ohio's mental health and addiction services and leverages data to inform decision-making. Through its Overdose Early Warning Dashboard, RecoveryOhio uses predictive analytics to determine when communities may be at heightened risk for a spike in drug overdoses. ONIC uses drug chemistry insight data from RecoveryOhio's dashboard to conduct statewide drug trend analysis, which is shared regularly with stakeholders to enhance situational awareness.

RecoveryOhio continues to be an important partner to ONIC, and is a key contributor to the Monthly Drug Trends Call. New in 2026, ONIC and RecoveryOhio will co-host the third day of the ONIC Drug Summit to expand reach, strengthen partnerships, and enhance information sharing among criminal justice, public health, treatment, recovery, and peer support professionals.

Operation BRIDGE

Operation Bridging Recovery & Interdiction Data Gathering Enforcement (BRIDGE) is a collaboration between RecoveryOhio, ONIC, Ohio's Office of Criminal Justice Services, and Ohio DPS. Operation BRIDGE seeks to break down barriers between law enforcement and treatment providers and create a concerted effort for those suffering from substance use disorders by simultaneously attacking the drug supply through interdiction and reducing demand through support services. ONIC Forensics and Intelligence supported various BRIDGE operations in 2025 with on-scene digital forensics, analytical capabilities, and informational outreach booths.



ONIC booth at the Cincinnati BRIDGE event

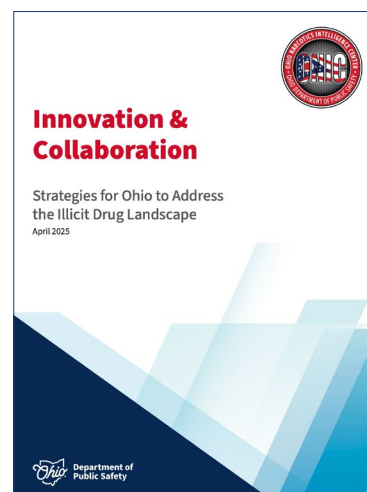
INFORMATION SHARING

To ensure timely and effective dissemination of information gathered through casework, research, and networks, ONIC uses multiple communication channels. These include intelligence bulletins, presentations, conferences, social media, and awareness events. Through these methods, ONIC educates law enforcement, public health professionals, the general public, and other key audiences on emerging drug trends and relevant intelligence. In 2025, ONIC delivered 132 presentations, hosted its annual Drug Summit and inaugural Cryptocurrency Conference, published six intelligence bulletins in addition to its first Strategic Report, participated in and led information-sharing calls, engaged in awareness events, and published an article in the July edition of the International Association of Chiefs of Police's (IACP's) *Police Chief* magazine titled "[Closing the Drug Intelligence Gap](#)."



ONIC Strategic Report

ONIC published its inaugural [Innovation & Collaboration: Strategies for Ohio to Address the Illicit Drug Landscape](#) report in April 2025. This public report is a response to Section 5502.69 of the Ohio Revised Code which directs ONIC to develop, update, and coordinate the implementation of an Ohio drug control strategy to guide state and local governments and public agencies. The report covers the evolution of the opioid crisis, examines the Ohio drug landscape from 2017 through 2022, highlights Ohio's response to the evolving landscape under Governor DeWine, provides a drug landscape outlook for 2025-2030, and outlines a drug control strategy to guide state and local counter-narcotics actions.



Cover of ONIC Strategic Report

ONIC Intelligence Bulletins

Throughout 2025, ONIC disseminated six intelligence bulletins, including one in collaboration with the DEA, and another with the FBI. These bulletins covered topics such as drug trafficking techniques, emerging drug trends, and newly identified substances in Ohio's illicit drug supply. Bulletins were used to inform and support law enforcement partners across the state in their operational and strategic decision-making.

ONIC publishes public bulletins and social media videos as needed to inform the public on emerging drug trends. Public bulletins are translated into multiple languages to help extend ONIC's messaging into more Ohio communities. ONIC's public bulletins and associated social media videos can be found on the [ONIC website](#).

Conferences and Hosted Trainings

2025 ONIC Law Enforcement Drug Summit

ONIC hosted its annual Law Enforcement Drug Summit in Columbus, Ohio, bringing together more than 550 law enforcement and criminal justice professionals for a free two-day event focused on collaboration and best practices in drug enforcement, prevention, and recovery. The Summit featured 19 presentations on topics such as Ohio's drug landscape, national trends, officer wellness, human trafficking, and investigative strategies. Presenters included six ONIC staff members and experts from private-sector organizations and local, state, and federal agencies.

ONIC partnered with 17 agencies to provide resources and distribute educational materials during the Summit's networking event. Partners including the Ohio School Safety Center, Buckeye Paws, and the Office of Public Safety Initiatives provided attendees with access to state-level resources and support services. Additionally, attendees had the opportunity to receive continuing professional training credits to advance their annual educational requirements.

The Summit continues to serve as a cornerstone event for enhancing statewide and national efforts in combating drug-related crime through informed, coordinated, and innovative approaches.



Networking event



ONIC Forensics presentation

“

From the opening session, it was clear this summit was designed not just to inform, but to connect. The depth of information shared, the diversity of agencies represented, and the open exchange of intelligence made this summit a true force multiplier in Ohio's ongoing fight against narcotics-related harm. One of the most powerful and memorable moments of the summit was the presentation by the female Marine officer who was shot in the line of duty in Texas and still pursued her assailants. Her story was not only a testament to courage, resilience, and professionalism, it was a reminder of why this work matters. Her perspective bridged tactical reality with human impact, and her presence brought a depth of authenticity that no textbook or policy slide ever could. – Crime Analyst, Whitehall Division of Police

ONIC Cryptocurrency Conference

ONIC hosted its inaugural two-day Cryptocurrency Conference in Spring 2025, designed to raise awareness and provide in-depth training to the criminal justice community on the complexities of cryptocurrency-related investigations.

This free event hosted 158 attendees including analysts, law enforcement officers, and prosecutors, offering comprehensive instruction on investigative techniques, tools, and legal considerations associated with digital currency. The conference served as a platform for the dissemination of best practices and the provision of essential resources, guidance, and support to professionals confronting the challenges posed by illicit cryptocurrency use.

The agenda featured nationally recognized experts in the field who shared their insights on the evolving role of cryptocurrency in criminal activity. Topics included fraud, scams, terrorism financing, and drug trafficking, highlighting both the risks and investigative opportunities presented by digital assets.

Attendees gained valuable knowledge to enhance their operational readiness and investigative capabilities, ensuring that Ohio's law enforcement community remains equipped to address the rapidly changing landscape of cryptocurrency-enabled crime.

Crypto 101 Day

ONIC co-hosted a free Crypto 101 Day in Fall 2025 with Independence Police Department for analysts, law enforcement officers, and prosecutors to provide introductory information on the illicit use of cryptocurrency. The training featured fundamentals of cryptocurrency and blockchain technology, investigative case studies, live cryptocurrency tracing (tools and blockchain), and best practices and guidance on cryptocurrency prosecution specific to Ohio.

The conference, geared towards law enforcement professionals with novice cryptocurrency investigative experience, brought together 67 attendees from Ohio and eight other states. Additionally, it provided the opportunity for attendees to familiarize themselves with cryptocurrency and its use in criminal activities, ensuring that law enforcement in Ohio remain at the forefront of investigative techniques and strategies in this rapidly evolving field.

The Illicit Fentanyl Crisis & Drug Poisonings

ONIC co-hosted The Illicit Fentanyl Crisis and Drug Poisonings training for criminal justice, law enforcement, and public safety professionals. Former DEA Special Agent Brian Townsend provided an in-depth and comprehensive training program addressing the opioid epidemic and the illicit fentanyl crisis. The 77 attendees were provided a thorough explanation of the crisis, from its historical roots to current challenges, offering participants actionable insights and practical tools to make a difference.

Open-Source Intelligence (OSINT) Course in Tactical Investigations

ONIC hosted a training in OSINT and how it is used in tactical investigations. Instructed by Michele Stuart, the 137 attendees in criminal justice and public safety professions learned open-source techniques by leveraging resources and effectively navigating social media platforms for investigative purposes.

Notable Speaking Engagements

Midwest Association of Forensic Scientists (MAFS) Conference

Five ONIC personnel provided a half-day block of instruction to 60 forensic scientists from more than 13 states and federal partners at the MAFS fall conference. The attendees learned about ONIC, drug trends we are seeing in Ohio, nationally, and internationally, as well as case studies and the outlook for the drug landscape. The presenters were asked many questions and received information on what other states are finding in their drug samples.



ONIC presenters at the MAFS Conference

FusionCon

ONIC presented at FusionCon, the Southwest Texas Fusion Center's annual conference, which hosted more than 350 attendees from across 15 states, representing federal, military, state, county, and local law enforcement agencies. ONIC delivered a homicide case study titled "Intelligence That Spoke for the Victim," highlighting the investigative and analytical techniques that contributed to solving the homicide of Allyson Lorenz (case spotlight featured on page 10).



Analyst Buccola presenting at FusionCon

Ohio School Safety Summit

ONIC presented an overview of drug trends affecting Ohio youth at the Ohio School Safety Center's annual summit. The audience of educators and school safety personnel were able to explore the latest research on risk and protective factors for youth illicit substance use and the evolving Ohio drug landscape.

Information Sharing Calls

Monthly Drug Trends Call

ONIC, in collaboration with RecoveryOhio and other key stakeholders, hosts a monthly call designed to address the narcotics crisis through a multidisciplinary approach. The Monthly Drug Trends Call provides decision-makers across public and private sectors with opportunities for information sharing and actionable intelligence on emerging trends, patterns, insights, and outcomes related to Ohio's narcotics epidemic. More than 800 individuals receive meeting deliverables, and attendance averages nearly 200 participants per call. The discussion integrates data from diverse sectors, including law enforcement, drug chemistry and toxicology laboratories, mental and behavioral health, and recovery services. Featured speakers have included university researchers, representatives from the DEA and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), OSHP, and leaders from nonprofit organizations.

Emerging Drug and Scientific Working Group (EDSWG)

ONIC facilitates a quarterly EDSWG call, providing a forum for forensic drug chemists and toxicologists across Ohio to discuss emerging substances and drug trends. These calls allow ONIC strategic analysts to engage directly with subject matter experts, generating insights that inform intelligence products shared for broad distribution. This group plays a vital role in the early detection of harmful substances entering Ohio's drug supply and allows ONIC to then assist the Ohio Board of Pharmacy in scheduling drugs as controlled substances. Since 2020, ONIC has assisted in the scheduling of 22 drugs, 21 of which are now Schedule I controlled substances in Ohio.

EDSWG participants also contribute to the Core Structure Review Initiative, which helps standardize the classification of novel psychoactive substances and supports consistent reporting across Ohio's forensic laboratories.

National Drug Trends Call

The National Drug Trends Call serves as a platform for state and federal law enforcement agencies to exchange intelligence on emerging drug trafficking patterns, particularly those originating from southwest border states and major source cities. ONIC assesses the actionable insights shared during these calls, incorporates them into intelligence products, and distributes relevant information to law enforcement partners throughout Ohio.

Public Awareness

Throughout 2025, ONIC organized numerous public events and outreach initiatives to raise awareness about various causes that support our mission.

Miss Portsmouth 2025

Miss Portsmouth 2025, Brittney Putman, visited ONIC to learn more about the agency's mission and operations to fuel her "You're Important Too" initiative. This initiative focuses on promoting awareness, support, and empowerment for individuals affected by substance misuse and related challenges.



Brittney Putman visiting ONIC Columbus

During her visit, ONIC provided an overview of its role in supporting law enforcement through intelligence sharing and investigative resources. Additionally, the discussion highlighted ONIC's efforts to enhance public awareness and foster stronger connections between law enforcement and community-based substance use disorder (SUD) support services. This engagement exemplifies ONIC's commitment to collaborative outreach and education aimed at bridging the gap between public safety and community wellness.

Drug Prevention and Awareness Events

Overdose Awareness Day, Red Ribbon Week, and DEA Drug Take Back Day are key observances that promote drug prevention and awareness across communities. Overdose Awareness Day, recognized annually on August 31st, brings attention to the devastating impact of overdose and honors those lost to substance use. Red Ribbon Week, held every October, is the nation's longest-running campaign focused on encouraging a drug-free lifestyle. ONIC participates in the DEA's Drug Take Back Day events hosted at Ohio DPS in collaboration with OSHP and the Office of Public Safety Initiatives. These events help Ohioans safely dispose of unused or expired medications and resulted in 31,346 pounds of prescription drug being turned in between two Drug Take Back Days in 2025. In support of these initiatives, ONIC analysts provided DPS staff with educational resources and public bulletins to help amplify prevention messaging and foster community engagement.



DPS employees signing the Red Ribbon Week pledge to be drug free



ONIC staff handing out Red Ribbon Week resources

Ohio State Fair

ONIC participated in the Ohio State Fair alongside many other state agencies, maintaining a booth for two weeks to engage with visitors. The team distributed drug trend bulletins, provided educational resources, and featured an interactive virtual opioid goggles activity to raise awareness about the dangers of opioid misuse.

September 11th Memorial Event

To commemorate the lives lost on September 11th, 2001, Ohio DPS hosted its annual 9/11 Climb at the historic Crew Stadium, encouraging employees to honor the 412 fallen first responders. ONIC staff participated in the event by completing 41 minutes and 20 seconds of physical movement, such as walking, stair climbing, yoga, or a CrossFit-style workout. ONIC regional offices participated in commemorative activities within their respective communities.



ONIC Cleveland staff participating in a 9/11 memorial walk



ONIC staff at the Ohio DPS 9/11 Climb event at the Historic Crew Stadium

ONIC STAFF DEVELOPMENT

2025 All-Staff Training

ONIC's 2025 all-staff training featured remarks from DPS Director Andy Wilson and Assistant Director Ben Suver, a presentation on generational collaboration in the workplace, and a visit from the FCSO's K-9 unit. ONIC leadership shared key updates and recognized the valuable contributions of staff throughout the year.



Remarks from Ohio DPS Assistant Director Ben Suver



ONIC Cincinnati regional team



ONIC staff

Forensics Certifications

ONIC's forensics staff maintained current certifications, attended trainings on advanced digital forensics, as well as obtained numerous certifications. All forensics staff successfully became Cellebrite Advanced Smartphone Analysis (CASA) certified, and all eligible staff completed recertification in Magnet Graykey. Additionally, three staff members obtained a Certified Evidence Repair Technician – Forensics (CERT-F) credential. It is crucial for the team to have the most up-to-date trainings to stay on top of rapid technology advancements and be courtroom ready.

Subject Matter Expert Certification

In 2025, 11 ONIC staff became certified as Subject Matter Experts in Call Detail Records and Geolocation Analysis through LexisNexis Risk Solutions. Analysts earned the certification after successfully completing a minimum of 80-hours of coursework in cellular technologies, followed by 12 months of case-study assignments with increasing complexity.

Internship Program

Each year, ONIC welcomes a select group of college interns to support its mission through a variety of assigned tasks and projects. These internship positions offer students valuable exposure to the fields of forensic and intelligence analysis, while also providing ONIC with the opportunity to mentor and invest in the development of future professionals in the narcotics and public safety areas. Through hands-on experience and guided learning, interns gain practical insights into the operational and analytical functions of ONIC, contributing meaningfully to the agency's work while enhancing their academic and professional growth. In 2025, ONIC expanded its internship program to operate year-round and to include placement opportunities in three of the four ONIC regional offices.



ONIC's Intelligence Outreach and Training Manager with ONIC interns at the 2025 Drug Summit

Clifton Strengths Training

ONIC staff completed Clifton Strengths training hosted by Ohio DPS's Learning and Development Team. The training began with staff completing the online strengths assessment, followed by a StrengthsFinder training event focused on understanding and leveraging individual and team strengths. The experience concluded with a collaborative workshop activity during ONIC's all-staff training, reinforcing practical application and team building.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Patriot Award

ONIC Executive Director Cynthia Peterman was recognized at the 2025 Patriot Awards for her exceptional contributions to public safety in Ohio and the nation. Alongside more than 30 years of career highlights, her award recognized her passion and dedication to intelligence-led policing, interagency collaboration, data-driven decision making, privacy and compliance, and information sharing. Her direction of ONIC resulted in establishing a "critical force" for law enforcement that has supported thousands of investigations as well as providing an educational and informational network to inform a holistic approach to the drug crisis at the public, professional, and policy level.



Director Peterman receives 2025 Patriot Award

International Association of Law Enforcement Intelligence Analysts (IALEIA) Professional Service Award

ONIC Analyst Duke Durant received the IALEIA Individual Contributor Award in 2025. IALEIA selects up to six winners for this annual award and stated, “This was an extremely competitive category this year and your work and accomplishments really stand out.” Analyst Durant was nominated for his work at ONIC over the past year, including his work on the Livingston and Lonsdale Gang that resulted in a 191-count indictment of 16 individuals. Analyst Durant was presented with the award during the IALEIA annual training event.



Analyst Durant receives IALEIA Individual Contributor award

U.S. Secret Service Top Forensic Examiner

ONIC Forensic Examiner Robert Seum was recognized by the U.S. Secret Service’s National Computer Forensic Institute as one of the top Forensic Partner Reporting (FPR) Examiners in 2025 — ranking 28th nationwide and 2nd in Ohio. Seum conducted more than 800 forensic examinations, generating more than 80 terabytes of data for criminal investigations. This achievement is particularly notable given that this was his first year of eligibility for the award in a pool of more than 35,000 examiners nationwide.



Forensic examiner Seum receives U.S. Secret Service Top Forensic Examiner Award

Hamilton County Police Association’s Clarence “Cid” Caesar Award

ONIC Analyst Kasi Powell received the Hamilton County Police Association’s Clarence “Cid” Caesar Award for Investigation Demonstrating Interagency Operation. Analyst Powell was recognized for intelligence support provided during her tenure at the Hamilton County Sheriff’s Office, where she supported an investigation that led to the identification and conviction of the suspect responsible for the fatal shooting of a nine-year-old girl.



Analyst Powell receives Cid Caesar Award

CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

“As an intelligence analyst from DEA Headquarters, I value work we have done in 2025 with ONIC. Analysts from ONIC demonstrate a high degree of professionalism and analytical rigor in pursuit of identifying emerging illicit drug threats. Our recent collaboration on a joint intelligence product was an effective exercise in teamwork between state partners, DEA field offices, and DEA Headquarters. Insights provided by ONIC to our 2025 joint report will have a positive impact for the wider U.S. law enforcement community as we continue work to understand the nature and magnitude of illicit drug trends affecting the United States. As the DEA continuously seeks to strengthen vital ties with state and local partners, working with ONIC has been an exceptional experience that highlights our shared commitment to public safety.”

– Intelligence Analyst, DEA Headquarters

“In late 2024, I began investigating a long-running stalking and harassment complaint which culminated in a murder-for-hire conspiracy. Throughout the case, multiple items of evidence were collected including cellular telephone extractions as well as data from social media applications. I requested ONIC’s assistance in reviewing and interpreting the large amount of digital evidence. Through [ONIC’s] analysis of the extracted devices and social media data, [the ONIC intelligence analyst] was able to locate pertinent conversations between the main subject and additional potential co-conspirators who were not yet known in the investigation. From these located conversations [the analyst] was able to positively identify an additional witness as well as an additional subject who was subsequently criminally charged.”

– Detective, Toledo Police Department

“I have seen ONIC’s products in the past especially regarding drug investigations and was very impressed with the product that came from the examination completed by ONIC analysts. This has proven instrumental in tying together my current drug conspiracy which involved several individuals and several addresses. Without this examination and product, I received, it would have been very challenging to further prove the conduct these individuals were involved in.”

– Task Force Officer, Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives

“The analyst report that I received was exceptionally well written and made the allegation of drug trafficking, instead of just possession, to be proven. I did not know what kind of product I would receive and was incredibly impressed with the details provided. It was easy to read and explain moving forward.”

– Detective, Columbus Division of Police

“I attended the 2025 ONIC Law Enforcement Drug Summit and found it to be an outstanding resource for current drug trend intelligence, investigative techniques, and interagency collaboration. The sessions provided practical, actionable insights, and the access to experienced instructors was a major benefit. I would highly recommend ONIC events to any law enforcement agency aiming to stay ahead of evolving narcotics threats in Ohio. Additionally, ONIC’s assistance with digital analysis of devices in one of our cases was prompt, professional, and critically valuable to our investigation. Their support has had a direct impact on our operational capabilities and case development.”

– Detective, Athens County Drug Task Force

2026 OUTLOOK

As we move into 2026, ONIC will build on its achievements by strengthening collaboration and continuing to deliver actionable intelligence. Highlights for the coming year include:

ONIC Law Enforcement Drug Summit

The 2026 ONIC Law Enforcement Drug Summit is scheduled to take place in May 2026 at The Ohio State University. This annual event will convene law enforcement professionals from across the state and beyond to engage in high-level discussions and training on critical issues impacting drug enforcement and public safety.

The Summit agenda will feature expert presentations on many pressing topics, including the current drug landscape in Ohio, emerging illicit drug trends, threats posed by Mexican cartels, and advancements in intelligence and forensic methodologies.

New for 2026, the Summit will expand to include a third day in collaboration with RecoveryOhio. This additional day is designed to broaden the Summit's reach, strengthen cross-sector partnerships, and enhance information sharing by welcoming a more diverse audience. Participants will include professionals from the criminal justice system, public health, substance use disorder treatment, recovery services, peer support networks, and other stakeholders committed to addressing the challenges of illicit drug use.

ONIC Cryptocurrency Conference

ONIC will host its second annual Cryptocurrency Conference, building on the success of last year's inaugural event. The 2026 conference will expand training opportunities for law enforcement and prosecutors, focusing on advanced investigative techniques, emerging technologies, and evolving legal considerations in cryptocurrency-related crime. This event will continue to strengthen Ohio's law enforcement community by equipping professionals with the tools and knowledge needed to combat illicit cryptocurrency use in an ever-changing digital landscape.

Drug Education Webpage

In 2026, ONIC will add a new feature to its website, a drug education section. ONIC understands that the public needs access to timely and accurate information regarding illicit drugs and the changing illicit drug supply. The drug education section will feature a mixture of original text, videos, and links to other resources to provide a comprehensive educational tool for anyone who seeks additional knowledge about the drug landscape across Ohio. The drug education webpage will highlight different drug classification categories, specific drugs, and trends within the Ohio drug landscape.

Expanded Engagement

ONIC will expand its national presence by delivering presentations at several conferences and meetings in 2026, including the National Fusion Center Association annual training, the National School Safety Alliance meeting, and the IALEIA annual training event where ONIC will teach a core class on analytic writing. In addition to speaking engagements, ONIC will host an array of specialized trainings in 2026, designed to equip law enforcement and criminal justice professionals with advanced investigative techniques, tools, and resources. This expanded engagement will strengthen collaboration, improve capabilities, and deliver actionable intelligence.

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Go to ONIC's Social Media Pages

