



Enhancing the 9 panel to what Arizona students deserve!

Student Transportation Advisory Council

Brent Benjamin July 27th 2026

WHO I AM

Brent Benjamin

Army Veteran and Unit Prevention Leader (26-panel drug screen)

Mobile Drug Collections, LLC – founded in 2000

Vice President 2010-2022

Owner 2022-Current

Masters of Science in Addiction Counseling

NDASA National Certified Collector Trainer

History of the 5 and 9

Arizona 9 Panel

ADOT passed R13-13-102 in 1989 to protect Arizona's vulnerable

Believed drivers should be tested for narcotics and the dangerous prescriptions: benzodiazepines, barbiturates, methadone and propoxyphene.

In 1996 authority shifted to DPS and DPS maintained keeping the Federal loophole closed and wanted to continue testing for dangerous prescriptions

Federal 5 Panel

- 1991 Omnibus Act
- Focused on Narcotics use and alcohol
- Created a program for testing for safety sensitive to be random
- FHWA Preamble

"Federal mandates establish a standard baseline for interstate commerce. States retain the traditional police power to enforce supplemental testing protocols necessary to protect local transit systems, provided they do not conflict with the execution of federal testing blocks."

(Intention is for states to use own authority)



Current 9 Panel

DRUGS	POSITIVITY RATE
THC	4.4%
COCAINE	.24%
OPIATES (Morphine, Codeine, Heroin)	.13%
AMPHETAMINES	1.7%
PCP	.006%
BENZODIAZEPINES	.31%
BARBITURATES	.14%
METHADONE	.13%
PROPOXYPHENE	0.00%



Federal 5 Panel

Drugs	Positivity Rate
THC	4.4%
COCAINE	.24%
OPIATES (Morphine, Codeine, Heroin)	.13%
Expanded Opiates (Oxycodone, Hydrocodone)	.52%
Amphetamine (Methamphetamine, MDMA)	1.7-1.8%
PCP	.006%

What Each Panel Excludes

9 Panel Excludes

Expanded Opiates	
OXYCODONE	.26%
HYDROCODONE	.26%
TOTAL	.52%

5 Panel Excludes

CNS DEPRESSANTS	
BENZODIAZEPINES	.31%
BARBITURATES	.14%
METHADONE	.13%
PROPOXYPHENE	0.00%
TOTAL	.58%

The Federal Program

PROS



Establishes a safety floor for safety-sensitive employees



Created clear consequences for positive results



Explicitly permits state level programs



Requires random drug testing between 25-50% and alcohol 10-25%.

CONS

- Difficult to make changes
- Still leaves major drugs unchecked
- Random rates will allow drivers to go years unchecked
- Random rates dependent on positivity rates. **(1% Rule)**

What Is Best For Arizona Students

- **Close the Federal Loophole:** Maintain the annual screening cycle originally intended by ADOT and AZDPS frameworks
- **Execute the panel swap:** Modernize the 9 panel by replacing Propoxyphene with Fentanyl (1.13%)



Screen	Cutoff	Confirmation	Cutoff
Fentanyl	.75ng/ml	Fentanyl LC-MSMS	.5ng/ml
		Norfentanyl LC-MSMS	.5ng/ml

Additional
Considerations: Modern
Resource Allocation

Remove Obsolete Drugs: Remove PCP from the state panel, shift public funding from a legacy drug with a negligible .006% workforce positivity rate.

Target True Impairment: Reallocate funds to include Expanded Opiates (Hydrocodone & Oxycodone) into the annual state mandate.

The Threat Comparison: At a .52% combined workforce positivity rate, a driver is nearly 90 times more likely to be operating a bus while impaired by these heavy prescription narcotics than by PCP



The Cost of Safety

The Core Financial Reality:

- **Laboratory Technology:** Fentanyl testing prices have decreased dramatically, and this is nearly a cost neutral swap
- **Predictable Public Expense:** The annual testing costs will still average around the same \$40- \$50 per test.

The School District Math (Factoring a Rough 20% Turnover):

- **Annuals:** A district of 100 active certifications will cost a predictable \$4000-\$5000.
- **Pre-Employment Turnover Buffer:** 20 new drivers will equate to \$800 to \$1000
- **A High-Utility Safety Return:** Improving this essential portion in safeguarding a 100-driver fleet, protecting thousands of students and community members maintains the same \$6000 annual cost this hypothetical district would pay.

The Liability

- Arizona Constitution forbids any caps on damages, including minor non-injury oversights
 - One AZ district paid 800k for a non-injury supervision failure
- Accidents resulting in injuries
 - Winnebago, Il (52 Million)
 - San Bernardino County, CA (36.1 Million)
 - Paramus, New Jersey (20 Million)

2013-2022: Arizona ranked 14th in having the most school bus fatalities with 24 total deaths. Maricopa County tied for 3rd for counties with 9 total fatalities over the same period.

Source: National Highway Traffic Safety Administration

<https://crashstats.nhtsa.dot.gov/Api/Public/ViewPublication/813600>



Questions?