



OSAM-O-GRAM



DATE: June 2007

DATELINE: Ohio

Wright State University & the University of Akron

High Availability of Crack Cocaine and Increasing Diversity of Users

According to the OSAM Network data obtained in the spring of 2007, crack availability remains high in all reporting areas of the state. User and service provider reports were supported by crime lab data indicating high availability of crack across Ohio. Some users described crack availability this way:

Very easy, easiest one, it is easier to get than weed. You can roll up anywhere here in Dayton. That's easier to get than beer, if you are not 21, you can get crack easier than you can get beer. (White man, Dayton)

Normally, you don't have to ask [for crack], you just ask for a 20, [and] you get crack, [if] you're in the crack area. You have the prostitutes out there directing traffic for the dealers. (African-American man, Columbus)

Users, social service providers, and law enforcement professionals described crack abuse as "endemic" to most urban areas of the state, increasing in some rural communities, and spreading among diverse user groups. Increasing reports about crack use among adolescents and young adults were noted in most areas. For example, a user from Toledo described crack-cocaine use among suburban youth:

You got people from all the outskirts [suburbs].... comin' out here [downtown] to get down on the wrong thing [crack]. They're gettin' high and pickin' up these girls, and gettin' their dope, and goin' to these hotels. I've seen people that don't have to be here, come from the suburbs, their families wealthy.... To them this is an adventure.

Social service providers and users in most areas of the state reported a continuing trend of middle-aged and older men being introduced to crack through their involvement with younger, crack-using women. A social service provider from Dayton commented:

I have seen a gentleman, he was a \$250 trick [would pay \$250 for a prostitute], and one of the girls [prostitutes] introduced him to a crack pipe, and he was up on the street begging. He was an engineer by trade. He was up there begging, trying to get a hit, because that crack took everything.

A growing trend of crack-cocaine abuse was reported among Hispanic men living in Dayton and surrounding rural areas. For example, a 21-year-old African-American woman indicated, "I noticed there is a handful of Mexicans that do actually do that [crack].... I seen they buy it from the same person I buy it from."

A long-term study of crack smokers in the Dayton area, conducted by Wright State University researchers and published in the September 2007 issue of *Addiction* (Vol. 102:1421-1431), concluded that use persisting for a decade or longer may well be the norm for a large proportion of people who have experience with the drug. An accompanying editorial, authored by Canadian researchers, referred to crack as "the 'neglected' epidemic" and "one of the largest and most destructive pieces in the overall picture" of the illicit drug problem in North America. This research, coupled with ongoing OSAM findings showing a continuing trend of high availability of crack cocaine, suggests the drug will be a problem for all concerned for the foreseeable future.

OSAM-O-GRAMS report key findings of the Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring (OSAM) Network. Informants located throughout the state use qualitative and quantitative data to provide semiannual monitoring of substance abuse trends. The OSAM Network is funded by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services by contract to Wright State University and by subcontract to the University of Akron. This OSAM-O-GRAM is based on the June 2007 OSAM Network meeting.

Center for Interventions, Treatment, and Addictions Research;
Robert G. Carlson, PhD, Raminta Daniulaityte, PhD, Tamara Hansen, MPH, Russel Falck, MA
(937) 775-2066 (office), (937) 775-2214 (fax) <http://www.med.wright.edu/citar/>
Wright State University, Boonshoft School of Medicine, 3640 Colonel Glenn Hwy., Dayton, OH 45435-0001
For more information, visit the ODADAS website: <http://www.odadas.state.oh.us>