

The Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring Network

Executive Summary January 2004 - June 2004

This Executive Summary reports highlights of the OSAM Network meeting held in Columbus, Ohio, June 4, 2004. The report is based on substance abuse trend data collected and analyzed by Regional Epidemiologists in Athens and surrounding counties (rural southeast), Akron-Canton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo, and Youngstown, Ohio. Regional Epidemiologists interviewed active and recovering drug users, law enforcement personnel, and substance abuse treatment providers, and collected statistical data from law enforcement, county coroners' offices, and substance abuse treatment facilities to compile their regional drug trend reports. Scientists at Wright State University (WSU) and the University of Akron reviewed their findings and compiled this report.

Crack Cocaine

Crack-Cocaine Availability and Abuse Remain High in Most Urban Areas of the State; Increases in Abuse Reported in the Rural Southeast.

Availability of crack cocaine remains high in most urban areas of the state. For the first time, increases in availability and abuse of crack cocaine were reported in the rural Southeast. According to WSU researchers, crack-cocaine abuse remains a growing problem in several rural communities in Western Ohio. Similar to previous reporting periods, active drug users reported that crack cocaine, on average, sells for \$50-60 per gram and \$800 - \$850 per ounce. Some areas report prices as high as \$100 per gram. Crack-cocaine abuse among youth and young adults continues to be reported by drug users and law enforcement professionals across the state. Some increases in crack abuse among adolescents have been noted by treatment providers working in the Cleveland area. Smoking remains the most common method of administration, although crack injection continues to be occasionally reported by active and recovering drug users.

Cocaine HCL

Availability of Powdered Cocaine Remains High; Continuing Increases of Abuse Reported Among Juveniles and Young Adults.

Most areas of the state continue to report high availability of powdered cocaine, a trend first identified in January 2003. Reports about quality vary by area. According to drug users, prices remained similar to the previous reporting period; a gram typically sells for \$50-\$60. Active users, treatment providers, and law enforcement professionals across the state continue to report increases in powdered cocaine abuse among juveniles and young adults. Powdered cocaine is typically snorted. According to users from different areas of the state, lacing marijuana and tobacco cigarettes with powdered cocaine is fairly common among younger individuals. Speed-ball injection (mixing heroin and powdered cocaine) continues to be reported as increasingly common in most areas of the state.

Heroin

Most Urban Areas of the State Continue to Report Increasing Availability of Heroin. For the First Time, Significant Increases Were Observed in the Rural Southeast.

According to drug users, law enforcement professionals, and substance abuse treatment providers, heroin continues to be highly available in most urban areas of the state. In the current reporting period, significant increases in heroin availability and abuse were observed in the Rural Southeast. Reportedly, purity of the drug is fairly high. According to drug users from Dayton and Columbus, as well as Miami Valley Crime Lab professionals, most of the currently available heroin is brown or beige in color, and is typically sold in powder or rock form. Heroin prices vary across regions of the state. Active drug users from the Dayton area reported some possible decreases in prices—from \$160 to \$125 per gram. According to active users and treatment providers from across the state, white suburban youth and young adults continue to be the most prevalent groups of new heroin users. Toledo area emergency room personnel reported seeing significant increases in heroin related overdose cases among white youth between ages 18 and 24. New heroin users may start off snorting the drug, but many eventually transition to intravenous use.

Other Opioids

Abuse of Pharmaceutical Opioids Remains a Growing Trend Across the State. Increasing Abuse of Methadone Tablets Reported in Most Areas of the State. Availability of Generic OxyContin® Was Reported for the First Time.

Increasing availability and abuse of pharmaceutical opioids continues to be reported across the state. According to active and recovering drug users, substance abuse treatment providers, law enforcement professionals, and probation officers, Vicodin® (hydrocodone), Percocet® (oxycodone & acetaminophen), OxyContin® (oxycodone controlled-release), Darvocet® (propoxyphene & acetaminophen), Lortab® (hydrocodone & acetaminophen), and codeine are among the most frequently abused prescription analgesics. In the current reporting period, significant increases in availability and abuse of methadone tablets obtainable from pain clinics were reported in the Akron, Athens, Columbus, Dayton, and Youngstown areas. For the first time, reports about abuse of generic OxyContin® were obtained in the Cleveland and Cincinnati areas. Prices of prescription analgesics remain similar to previous reporting periods, OxyContin® typically sells for \$0.50 – \$1 per milligram, and hydrocodone sells between \$2 and \$7 per tablet. Methadose® (methadone) 10 mg tablets sell for \$5-\$10. According to active users and treatment providers, white adolescents and young adults continue to be the fastest growing group of new users. The connection between initial prescription opioid dependence and subsequent transition to heroin abuse continues to be reported as a widespread trend.

Marijuana

Marijuana Remains Highly Available and Commonly Abused Across the State.

Reportedly, availability of marijuana remains high across the state. Drug users and law enforcement professionals continue to report increasing quality of the drug. Similarly to previous reporting periods, 1/8 ounce of low grade marijuana, on average, sells for \$20, mid-grade for \$30, and high grade marijuana sells for \$50-60 per 1/8 ounce, Marijuana remains the primary illicit drug of abuse among adolescents.

Methamphetamine and Other Stimulants

Methamphetamine Availability and Abuse Continue to Increase in Most Urban Areas of the State. First Reports About Increases in Abuse Were Obtained in the Rural Southeast. Abuse of Prescription Stimulants Continues to Be Reported Among Juveniles and Young Adults.

According to active users and law enforcement professionals, the availability and abuse of methamphetamine continue to increase in the Akron, Cincinnati, Columbus, Dayton, Toledo and Youngstown areas. For the first time, some increases in methamphetamine availability were reported in the rural Southeast. Participants reported local production of methamphetamine, as well as trafficking of higher quality methamphetamine. Reported average prices of high-quality methamphetamine (“ice,” “glass”) vary from \$100 to \$150 per gram across the state, and are comparable to the previous reporting period. Lower quality methamphetamine (“crank”) sells between \$35 and \$50 per gram. Active users reported increasing heterogeneity of the user population. However, white adolescents and young adults constitute one of the fastest growing groups of new methamphetamine users. Some of these users may get introduced to the drug at rave-type parties. According to active users, methamphetamine is typically snorted, smoked, or swallowed. Injection is reported less frequently. Active users in the Columbus and Dayton areas reported “hot railing,” described as inhaling crystal methamphetamine through the nose as it vaporizes when passing through a heated glass pipe.

Abuse of Adderall® (amphetamine mixed salts) and Ritalin® (methylphenidate) continues to be reported in most areas of the state. Reportedly, prescription stimulant abuse is especially common among some high school and college age individuals who will use the drug as a “study aid.”

Depressants

Benzodiazepine Abuse Remains Common Among Very Diverse Populations of Users. Dextromethorphan (DXM) Abuse Continues to Be Reported in the Youngstown Area.

Most areas of the state continue to report that the illicit use of benzodiazepines, especially Xanax® (alprazolam), Valium® (diazepam), and Klonopin® (clonazepam) remains relatively common among very diverse populations of users. Benzodiazepines are commonly abused in combination with other substances to enhance or modify their effects. Abuse of over-the-counter medications containing DXM continues to be reported in the Youngstown area. Abuse is typically common among adolescents.

Hallucinogens

Fluctuating Availability of LSD Reported Across the State; Some Increases in Availability of Psilocybin Mushrooms Reported in Several Areas of the State.

In the current reporting period, drug users continue to report fluctuation in availability of LSD. Reportedly, availability of psilocybin mushrooms is more consistent. According to active user reports from the Rural Southeast, some individuals grow their own psilocybin mushrooms. Similar to previous reporting periods, psilocybin mushrooms on average sell for \$25-35 per 1/8 ounce.

Decreases in MDMA (Ecstasy) Abuse Continue to Be Reported in All Areas of the State, Except Toledo.

First reports about possible decreases in Ecstasy abuse were obtained in June 2003. In the current reporting period, drug users, substance abuse treatment providers, and law enforcement personnel from most areas of the state except Toledo, continue to report decreasing popularity of Ecstasy among its “traditional” users --white suburban youth and young adults who frequent raves and dance clubs. However, according to active user reports from the Dayton and Columbus areas, Ecstasy abuse remains common among younger users, some in their teen years. More experienced club drug users sometimes switch over to other drugs, including methamphetamine. Ecstasy prices continue to average \$20 per tablet.

Continuing Increases in PCP (Phencyclidine) Availability and Abuse Reported in the Cleveland Area.

In previous reporting periods, occasional cases of PCP abuse were reported in the Cincinnati, Dayton, Columbus, and Youngstown areas. A relatively consistent trend of PCP abuse continues to be seen in the Cuyahoga County area. Reportedly, PCP is typically used along with marijuana or tobacco cigarettes, and on average sells for \$10 per “dip” or “wet.” According to users and treatment providers from the Cleveland area, PCP is described as “an inner city drug” used predominately by adolescents and young adults.

Previous OSAM reports are available at: <http://www.odadas.state.oh.us>