

The Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring Network (OSAM) January 2005 Meeting

Executive Summary

Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services

This Executive Summary reports highlights of the OSAM Network meeting held in Columbus, Ohio, January, 28, 2005. 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. Regional Epidemiologists interviewed active and recovering drug users, substance abuse treatment providers, and law enforcement personnel, and collected available statistical data to compile their regional drug trend reports. Researchers at Wright State University (WSU) and the University of Akron reviewed their findings and compiled this report.

CRACK COCAINE

- **Crack cocaine continues to be available in most urban and some rural areas of the state.**

Active drug users continue to report high availability of crack cocaine in most urban areas across the state. Reports about increasing availability of crack cocaine in the Rural Southeast first obtained in the previous reporting period, were confirmed this round. Preliminary OSAM Network reports indicate high levels of crack-cocaine availability and abuse in the Mansfield area. According to WSU researchers, crack-cocaine abuse remains a growing problem in several rural communities in western Ohio. Prices have remained similar to the previous reporting period, averaging \$50 per gram and \$125-150 per 1/8 ounce in most urban areas of the state. According to some active users and juvenile probation officers from the Dayton area, the stigma associated with crack use has been diminishing among certain groups of white youth and young adults. Similar to previous reporting periods, drug users and treatment providers in most areas of the state continue to report an increasing population of new crack-cocaine users consisting of middle-aged and older individuals from suburban communities.

COCAINE HCL

- **High availability and relatively low prices of powdered cocaine reported across the state.**

Active users in most areas of the state continue to report high availability of powdered cocaine. Reports about quality vary by geographic location and user group. Similar to the previous reporting period, a gram typically sells for \$50-\$60; prices in the Athens, Akron, and Cleveland areas were reportedly higher, averaging \$100 per gram. Juveniles and young adults remain one of the most commonly mentioned emerging groups of powdered cocaine users. Inhaling the drug remains the most common means of administration, although the injection of speedball (a mix of heroin and cocaine) is increasingly common in many areas of the state.

HEROIN

- **Heroin availability and abuse continues to increase across the state. White, suburban youth and young adults remain the most frequently mentioned group of new heroin users.**

All OSAM Network areas except suburban Toledo continue to report increasing availability of heroin. Some active users from the Dayton, Cleveland, and Youngstown areas compared availability of heroin to that of cocaine. Reports about increasing heroin availability in the Athens area, first obtained in the

Spring of 2003, were confirmed this round. Preliminary OSAM Network findings suggest significant increases in heroin availability in the Mansfield area. Active users from across the state continue to report that most of the available heroin is brown or beige in color, and is sold in powder form. Users from the Columbus area reported increases in black tar heroin; reports of sporadic availability of black tar heroin have been obtained in the Cincinnati, Dayton, Youngstown, and Athens areas as well. A gram of heroin on average sells for \$200 in the Cincinnati and Columbus areas. Active users in Dayton reported average prices as low as \$120 per gram, which is comparable to the previous reporting period. White, suburban youth and young adults remain the most frequently mentioned group of new heroin users in most areas of the state. Potential increases in abuse among African-American youth were reported by emergency room personnel in the Toledo area. Treatment providers from Akron reported increasing heroin abuse among white individuals from rural communities.

OTHER OPIOIDS

- **Pharmaceutical opioid abuse continues to be reported across the state. Initial opioid abuse and subsequent heroin use remains a commonly reported trend.**

According to active users, OxyContin® (oxycodone controlled-release) continues to have high demand in most areas of the state, but its availability appears to vary by region. Participants continue to report high accessibility and increasingly common abuse of methadone tablets, Vicodin® (hydrocodone & acetaminophen), and Percocet® (oxycodone & acetaminophen) in many areas of the state. Similar to previous reporting periods, prices of oxycodone, methadone, and hydrocodone containing products typically range between \$0.50 and \$1 per milligram of opioid content. For example, a 40 milligram OxyContin® tablet may sell for \$20-40, and a tablet of Vicodin® ES (7.5 mg of hydrocodone) around \$5. As in the previous reporting period, pharmaceutical opioid abuse continues to be commonly reported among white, suburban adolescents and young adults who often abuse these drugs in combination with other substances. The connection between initial opioid abuse and subsequent heroin use continues to be reported across the state.

MARIJUANA

- **Marijuana remains readily available across the state.**

Reportedly, marijuana remains readily available across the state. Reports about individuals growing their own marijuana continue to increase. Drug users continue to report increasing potency 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. According to drug users and substance abuse treatment providers, marijuana is seldom viewed as a harmful substance among users, and it remains the primary illicit drug of abuse among juvenile treatment admissions.

METHAMPHETAMINE

- **Methamphetamine availability continues to increase in most areas of the state, except Cleveland. Dayton area substance abuse treatment providers report increases in methamphetamine-related admissions for the first time.**

Continuing increases in methamphetamine availability and abuse are being reported in all OSAM Network areas, except Cleveland. According to active users, methamphetamine distribution remains more secretive than most other illegal drug distribution. Reports of methamphetamine production in rural areas continue to increase. According to active users, methamphetamine prices average \$100 per gram in the Akron, Cincinnati, and Dayton areas. However, in the Columbus area, prices reported are as low as \$50 per gram. The Youngstown area reports prices as high as \$150 per gram. Reportedly, methamphetamine abuse continues to concentrate among white youth and young adults as well as among white middle-aged individuals of lower socioeconomic status. According to active users, methamphetamine is typically snorted, smoked, or swallowed. Injection is reported less frequently. For

the first time since methamphetamine increases have been observed in the Dayton area, local substance abuse treatment agencies have reported some increases in methamphetamine-related admissions.

DEPRESSANTS

- **Benzodiazepine abuse remains common.**

Most areas of the state continue to report high street availability of Xanax® (alprazolam). Illicit use of Valium® (diazepam), Klonopin® (clonazepam), and Ativan® (lorazepam) continues to be reported across different regions, but to a lesser degree than the abuse of Xanax®. According to drug user reports, benzodiazepines are commonly abused in combination with other substances, especially alcohol.

HALLUCINOGENS

- **MDMA (Ecstasy) abuse continues to decrease across the state, except Athens.**

The OSAM Network obtained first reports about decreases in Ecstasy abuse in the spring of 2003. Current findings indicate a continuing decline in availability and abuse of Ecstasy in most regions of the state, except in the Athens area. Interviews with drug users from Athens suggested a potential “resurgence” in Ecstasy abuse in that area. Ecstasy prices continue to average \$20 per tablet.

- **PCP (Phencyclidine) increases in availability in the Cleveland Area.**

Increases in availability and abuse of PCP were reported in the Cleveland area. Similar to previous reports, PCP is typically smoked in a marijuana cigarette, and on average sells for \$10 per “dip” or “wet.” The price of liquid PCP averages \$65 per gram. PCP use in Cleveland was reportedly more common among African-American adolescents and young adults. Reports about PCP abuse in other areas of the state remain sporadic and inconsistent.

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