

**The Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring Network (OSAM)
June 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, June 24, 2005. The report is based on substance abuse trend data collected and analyzed by Regional Epidemiologists (REPIs) 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 and the University of Akron reviewed their findings and compiled this summary of major findings.

CRACK COCAINE

- **Crack-cocaine abuse may be increasing among more affluent, suburban whites. Potential increases in abuse were noted among the Hispanic population in Columbus and Dayton.**

Crack-cocaine abuse and availability remain high in most urban areas of the state. Substance abuse treatment providers continue to report high levels of crack-cocaine abuse among their clients. New emerging user groups were identified in several areas of the state. Youngstown, Akron, and Columbus reported increasing crack-cocaine abuse among more affluent, suburban whites. The Columbus and Dayton reports indicated potential increases in crack-cocaine abuse among Hispanics. Smoking crack cocaine remains the primary method of use; however, Dayton, Youngstown, and Akron also reported slight increases in crack-cocaine injection. Prices reported for crack cocaine were slightly lower than last round. An eightball (1/8 ounce) cost between \$100 and \$150.

POWDERED COCAINE

- **Adolescent and college-age whites continue to be reported as a growing population of powdered cocaine abusers.**

Powdered cocaine remains readily available in all reporting areas of the state. Adolescents and college-age whites continue to be reported as an increasing group of new users. Intranasal inhalation is the primary method of administration. On average, a gram reportedly sells for \$50. However, prices in the Akron area are reportedly higher, reaching up to \$100 per gram.

HEROIN

- **Heroin availability and abuse continue to increase across the state. "Tar" heroin is now consistently available in parts of Columbus.**

Most areas of the state continue to report increases in heroin availability and abuse. Most heroin in the state is described as "brownish" in color. "Tar" heroin is sporadically available and somewhat rare, except in Columbus where active users report "tar" being consistently available in some areas. The Akron, Dayton, Youngstown, Columbus, and Cleveland areas continue to report increases in heroin abuse primarily among young whites. Among this group, heroin abuse tends to be via intranasal inhalation, but some users eventually transition to injection. Most areas of the state

continue to report of individuals abusing pharmaceutical opioids and later transitioning to heroin abuse for a stronger, less expensive high. The cost for a gram of heroin ranged between \$100 and \$150.

PHARMACEUTICAL OPIOIDS

- **OxyContin® availability continues to decline in most areas of the state, except Athens. The Akron area reported increases in the availability and abuse of Kadian®.**

Demand for pharmaceutical opioids such as Vicodin® (hydrocodone), Percocet® (oxycodone), and OxyContin® (oxycodone controlled-release) remains at high levels throughout the state. An increase in the availability of Kadian® (morphine controlled-release) was reported by active users in Akron. Active users in the Dayton and Youngtown areas continue to report street availability of methadone tablets. Participants in all areas of the state, except Athens, reported slight decreases in the availability of OxyContin® over the past six months. In contrast, participants from Athens not only reported significant increases in the availability of the drug, but also increases in intravenous injection of the drug. Prices reported for pharmaceutical opioids remained consistent, with OxyContin® selling for .50 to \$1 per milligram, and other pharmaceutical opioids such as Vicodin® and Percocet® selling for about \$3 to \$5 per tablet. Abusers are described primarily as whites. Younger users (e.g., high school age to 25 years old) continue to be reported.

MARIJUANA

- **Widespread abuse of marijuana across diverse groups of users continues to be reported across the state.**

Consistent with past reports, marijuana remains readily available across the state. Although the quality of the drug varies significantly, users in Dayton and Athens perceived a general increase in the quality of marijuana available. Prices remained consistent over the past six months with 1/8 ounce of marijuana costing anywhere from \$25 - \$60, depending on the quality of the drug. The perception among users that marijuana is a *safe* drug that is socially acceptable persists among active drug abusers.

METHAMPHETAMINE

- **Most regions of the state reported gradual but consistent increases in the availability and abuse of methamphetamine. The diversity of the abuser population suggests a developing threat of “multiple methamphetamine epidemics.”**

In the current reporting period, the OSAM Network conducted a Targeted Response Initiative focused on methamphetamine abuse. Most regions of the state, except Cleveland, reported an increasing trend in methamphetamine availability and abuse. These reports are corroborated by the continuing increases in methamphetamine lab arrests across the state. Typical methamphetamine prices were reported around \$100 per gram. Smoking and intranasal inhalation were reported as the most common modes of administration. User groups include men-who-have sex-with-men, young adults age 18-25 in the “rave” or party scene, and low/middle class whites in both urban and rural environments. Further details regarding our findings on methamphetamine abuse will be forthcoming in a series of OSAM-O-Grams.

PHARMACEUTICAL TRANQUILIZERS

- **Benzodiazepine availability and abuse remain consistent at relatively high levels.**

The abuse and availability of benzodiazepines such as Xanax® (alprazolam) and Valium® (diazepam) remain consistent at high levels across the state. As in past reports, benzodiazepines are commonly used in combination with other drugs—most notably, alcohol, because of the enhanced effects that result.

HALLUCINOGENS

- **Increases in the availability of MDMA/ecstasy were noted in several areas of the state. LSD and psilocybin remain available at low levels, except in Columbus where young users report increased availability of the two drugs.**

Although ecstasy abuse in the state has been on a steady decline since the early 2003, increases in availability of the drug were reported in some areas. Following an increase in the availability of ecstasy in Athens previously, Akron and Cleveland are now reporting increases in availability of the drug. Users are described as being primarily young (18-24) and of white ethnicity. Active drug abusers from the Akron area reported that crack dealers were using ecstasy, and reportedly selling both crack cocaine and ecstasy.

Availability and abuse of LSD and psilocybin (mushrooms) fluctuates greatly across the state. Users are described as primarily young (18-24) white individuals.

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