

The Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring Network (OSAM) January 2007 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 26, 2007. 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. Crime labs in Columbus, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Dayton, Toledo, and labs of Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation (BCI&I) in Richfield (covering Cleveland, Akron and Youngstown), London (Southern and Central Ohio), and Bowling Green (Northwest Ohio excluding Toledo) were surveyed to collect additional data on drug purity and availability. Researchers at Wright State University reviewed reports and compiled this summary of major findings.

CRACK COCAINE

- **Crack cocaine was reported as highly available and increasing in all areas of the state. Many areas reported wider acceptability of crack use.**

Drug users continue to report high availability of crack cocaine throughout the state ("10+" on a 0 to 10 scale). Many areas of the state reported adolescent involvement in crack-cocaine dealing. Crime lab professionals reported high purity of crack (above 60%) in most reporting areas of the state. According to drug users, crack prices have been steady or decreased somewhat in the past six months, with an average price ranging between \$25-\$50 per gram or \$80-\$125 per 1/8 ounce. Users continue to report lower prices in the inner-city areas and higher prices in the suburban and rural areas. Many areas reported wider social acceptability of crack use. The Cincinnati area reported crack-cocaine users as young as 12-15 years old; other areas indicated that initiation to crack use typically occurs in "the early 20s." Smoking remains the primary method of administration with decreasing reports of intravenous crack-cocaine use. Participants continue to report use of marijuana or tobacco cigarettes laced with crack cocaine ("*wooly*", "*coco puff*" and "*primo*").

COCAINE HCl

- **Moderate to high availability of powdered cocaine was reported in most areas of the state. Increasing cocaine HCl use by adolescents and young adults (ages 16-27) was reported across the state.**

In most areas of the state, cocaine HCl was reported as being highly available with the exception of Toledo where users and crime lab professionals reported powdered cocaine availability as low and decreasing. Most crime labs reported moderate to high purity of cocaine HCl. Drug users interviewed in Dayton, Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Youngstown reported prices as low as \$30-\$60 per gram. Higher prices were reported in Columbus, Akron and Cleveland areas, reaching \$80-\$100 per gram. Intranasal

inhalation remains the most common mode of administration with some injection use of cocaine HCl reported among heroin users. Participants reported increasing popularity of powdered cocaine as a party drug, especially among whites and “younger people with money” (ages 16-27), who often use it in combination with alcohol.

HEROIN

- **Most urban areas of the state reported moderate and increasing availability of heroin. Cases of heroin mixed with fentanyl were reported by users and crime lab professionals throughout the state.**

Heroin availability was rated as moderate to high in most urban areas of the state. According to crime lab data, heroin cases in the Columbus area changed from low to high in less than six months. Brown powder remains the most common form of the drug; black tar heroin was more difficult to find this reporting period. Heroin mixed with fentanyl was reported by users and crime lab professionals throughout the state. Consistent with last reporting period, a gram typically sold for \$120-\$150 in most areas of the state. However, users reported prices as low as \$90 per gram in Dayton and as high as \$300 per gram in Akron. All areas of the state reported continuing increases in heroin use among white suburban youth (age 18-25), particularly females. Many of these users have transitioned to heroin from abuse of pharmaceutical opioids such as OxyContin® (oxycodone controlled-release). Young users initially prefer intranasal inhalation of the drug. Injection use is more common among older users, particularly African-American men. Increased heroin use and distribution among Hispanics was reported in Youngstown, Cleveland and Toledo. Heroin was commonly used in combination with cocaine HCl (as a “speedball”) and sometimes in combination with benzodiazepines. Treatment providers in Toledo noted a decrease in heroin-addicted clients but an increase in young, white adults addicted to pharmaceutical opioids.

PHARMACEUTICAL OPIOIDS

- **Some decreases in OxyContin® availability were reported across the state. Both users and treatment providers indicated increasing abuse of methadone tablets.**

According to users, treatment providers, and law enforcement professionals, OxyContin® (oxycodone controlled-release) continues to be among the most desirable prescription opioids, but decreases in its availability were noted in most areas of the state. Vicodin® (hydrocodone & acetaminophen) and Percocet® (oxycodone & acetaminophen) remain commonly abused. Participants reported increasing street availability and abuse of methadone tablets and wafers. Some street availability of liquid methadone was reported in Columbus and Athens. Continued reports of Duragesic® (fentanyl transdermal system) availability and abuse were obtained in Toledo, Cleveland and Dayton. Dilaudid® (hydromorphone) abuse was reported in Toledo, Athens, Cleveland and Cincinnati. Street availability and abuse of Suboxone® (buprenorphine HCl/naloxone HCl dihydrate), although limited, was reported by users in Dayton. Crime lab professionals in Cleveland and BCI&I labs in Bowling Green and London also reported cases of buprenorphine (Suboxone®/Subutex®) diversion.

Most prescription analgesics continue to sell for \$0.50-\$1 per milligram of opioid content. Potential increases in OxyContin® prices were reported in several areas of the state; users in Athens reported paying upwards of \$2 per milligram for OxyContin® tablets.

Prescription opioid abusers were described as being primarily white suburban individuals between the ages of 20-40 years. Several areas reported users as young as 14-16 years old. Treatment providers indicated a growing number of young, white females entering treatment for pharmaceutical opioid

abuse. Oral ingestion remains the most common mode of administration for most pharmaceutical opioids. Intranasal inhalation of crushed OxyContin® tablets was also reported as a common method of administration. Reports of intravenous injection were less frequent.

MARIJUANA

- **Marijuana availability and abuse remain high in most areas of the state. Continued reports of increases in marijuana use among youth (ages 11-16).**

Users and crime lab professionals reported marijuana availability to be high across the state. Users continue to report a wide variety of marijuana with regard to type and quality. Prices for 1/8 ounce of marijuana were reported as \$25 - \$80, depending on quality. Treatment providers, users, and law enforcement continue to report high levels of marijuana use among diverse user groups, including teenagers (ages 11-16). Alcohol is commonly used in combination with marijuana.

METHAMPHETAMINE

- **Methamphetamine availability is reportedly decreasing in several areas of the state. Some methamphetamine users are transitioning to crack-cocaine use.**

Users and crime lab professionals continue to report geographic variation in methamphetamine availability. Higher availability was noted by users and law enforcement in rural areas adjacent to Athens, Akron, and Toledo. All other areas of the state reported moderate/low and declining availability of the drug. According to most crime labs, methamphetamine purity remains moderate (30-60%). Powder continues to be the most prevalent form of the drug in most areas of the state, except Cleveland, where glass-type methamphetamine is more available. Columbus crime lab professionals reported that methamphetamine is commonly found in tablets with MDMA. Users in Cincinnati reported availability of pink powdered methamphetamine that was reportedly shipped into the area from the West Coast and priced at \$75 per gram. Smoking remains one of the most common modes of methamphetamine administration. One group of methamphetamine users were described as white individuals between ages 25 and 35. Reportedly, gay men represent another group of methamphetamine users. Most participants indicated decreases in methamphetamine use and noted that some users tend to switch to crack cocaine when methamphetamine becomes less available to them. Treatment providers across the state indicated that very few clients report methamphetamine as a primary drug of choice.

PHARMACEUTICAL TRANQUILIZERS

- **Varying levels of benzodiazepine availability were reported across the state.**

According to drug users and crime lab professionals, there was a slight increase in street availability of benzodiazepines, such as Xanax® (alprazolam), Klonopin® (clonazepam), and Valium® (diazepam). Crime labs professionals in Columbus, Dayton, BCI&I London and Canton/Stark County reported high availability of benzodiazepines with all other areas reporting moderate to low availability. Toledo users reported a slight increase in Ativan® (lorazepam) abuse. According to drug users, benzodiazepines are frequently abused in combination with other substances, particularly alcohol, cocaine and other pharmaceuticals.

HALLUCINOGENS

- **High availability of MDMA/Ecstasy was reported in the Athens, Northwest Ohio, and Cincinnati areas.**

Reports of MDMA/Ecstasy availability and abuse continue to fluctuate in Ohio. Crime labs in Athens, Cincinnati, and BCI&I Richfield and Bowling Green reported high availability of Ecstasy. Columbus, Toledo, Cleveland and Canton/Stark County crime lab professionals reported moderate levels of Ecstasy availability. MDMA/Ecstasy prices were lower this period ranging between \$7 and \$20 per single dose.

Users and crime lab professionals across the state reported little to no availability of LSD. BCI&I Bowling Green reported high availability of psilocybin mushrooms and users in Cincinnati reported moderate availability of the drug.

OTHER DRUGS

- **Increasing abuse of Soma® and Ritalin® were reported in several areas of the state. Cases of Seroquel® abuse were identified in the Akron area.**

Treatment providers and users in Akron and Columbus reported increased abuse of Soma® (carisoprodol), a muscle relaxant with sedative properties, especially among individuals who also use crack cocaine. Crime lab professionals reported low to moderate availability of Soma® tablets except in Canton/Stark county where availability was reported as high. Increasing reports about Ritalin® (methylphenidate) abuse were obtained in Akron, Cleveland and Toledo. Users in the Akron area reported abuse of Seroquel® (quetiapine fumarate), an atypical antipsychotic, for its sedative effects. Seroquel® is not classified as a controlled substance, and is prescribed to treat symptoms of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder.

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