

The Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring (OSAM) Network June 2007 Meeting

Executive Summary

Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services

This Executive Summary highlights the OSAM Network meeting that was held in Columbus, Ohio, on June 7-8, 2007. The report is based on substance abuse trend data collected in Ohio and analyzed by Regional Epidemiologists (REPIs) in Athens and surrounding counties (rural southeast), the Akron/Canton area, 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 Canton/Stark as well as labs of the 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 these reports and compiled this summary of major findings.

CRACK COCAINE

- **High availability of crack cocaine was reported across the state. An increasing trend of crack abuse was noted among Hispanic males in the Dayton area.**

Crack cocaine availability remained high in several areas, but slight decreases were noted in the Cincinnati, Cleveland, and Athens. Most crime labs reported high purity of crack cocaine (i.e., above 60%). Prices for crack cocaine remained steady at \$35-\$60 per gram in most areas of the state, but Athens and Columbus reported prices averaging \$80-\$100 per gram. All areas reported increasing diversity of user populations with regard to age, gender, ethnicity and socioeconomic status. Participants reported continuing increases in crack abuse among adolescents and older adults. Increases in crack abuse were noted among Hispanic males in the Dayton area. Crack is commonly abused in combination with alcohol, marijuana, benzodiazepines, and other pharmaceutical drugs. Smoking remains the most common mode of administration, although most areas of the state also reported cases of crack injection.

COCAINE HCl

- **Moderate to high availability of cocaine HCl was reported by users and crime labs throughout the state. Dayton reported an emerging trend of powdered cocaine use and dealing among Hispanic males in the surrounding rural areas.**

According to users and crime lab professionals, cocaine HCl availability remained moderate to high in most regions of the state. Significant increases in cocaine HCl availability were reported in the Toledo area. Both users and quantifying crime labs reported high purity (above 60%) of the drug. On average, prices remained consistent with the previous reporting period at \$50-\$60 per gram and \$120-\$150 per eighth-ounce. Slightly higher prices were reported in Athens, and lower prices were reported in Dayton and Cincinnati. Concurrent use of cocaine and sedating substances, including alcohol, heroin, and

marijuana, was reported as being common among users in all regions. The Cincinnati Drug and Poison Information Center reported a case of cocaine HCl adulterated with clenbuterol, a drug similar to ephedrine and which is in limited use in veterinary medicine in the US. Reportedly, powdered cocaine use is common among diverse populations, including white, suburban adolescents and young adults, African-American youth involved in crack dealing, blue-collar workers, and young women working as “exotic dancers.” Dayton reported a trend of cocaine HCl use and dealing among Hispanic males who live in the surrounding rural areas. Intranasal inhalation remained the primary mode of administration. Most areas also reported injection use of powdered cocaine in conjunction with heroin (“speedballing”) as common or increasing.

HEROIN

- **Most urban areas of the state reported moderate to high availability of heroin. Black tar heroin was reported as a predominant form in Columbus and the rural southeast, and increasing in availability in the Youngstown area.**

According to drug users and crime lab reports, heroin availability was moderate to high across the state except in rural southeast, where availability was low. Some decreases were noted in the Akron/Canton area. Brown powder was the most commonly reported form of the drug in most areas. Black tar was reported as a predominant form in Columbus and the rural southeast, and increasing in availability in the Youngstown area. Several areas of the state, including Columbus and Akron, reported increasing involvement of Hispanic individuals in heroin distribution. Reports of heroin being mixed with fentanyl have decreased across the state, but Cincinnati reported cases of heroin mixed with clenbuterol. Consistent with the previous reporting period, a gram of heroin typically sold for \$100-\$150 across the state. Most areas reported continuing increases in heroin abuse among young (late teens - early 20s), white individuals from suburban areas. The Dayton and Toledo areas reported increases in heroin abuse among middle-aged white women. Pharmaceutical opioid abuse remained a commonly reported pathway to heroin abuse. New heroin abusers initially prefer intranasal inhalation, but the majority eventually transition to intravenous use. Heroin is commonly used in combination with cocaine HCl (as a “speedball”) and sometimes in combination with benzodiazepines and pharmaceutical opioids. According to Dayton area reports, some older heroin users take Tylenol® PM or Nyquil® tablets to enhance the effects of heroin.

PHARMACEUTICAL OPIOIDS

- **Medium to high availability of hydrocodone, oxycodone and methadone tablets/wafers was reported across the state. Fentanyl, hydromorphone, and buprenorphine abuse was reported.**

Users, treatment professionals, and crime lab personnel across the state continue to report high availability of hydrocodone (e.g., Vicodin®). Availability of Percocet® (oxycodone and acetaminophen) was also rated high in most areas. Although slight decreases in the availability of OxyContin® (oxycodone controlled-release) were noted in several reporting areas, it remained one of the most desirable pharmaceutical opioids, with estimated street availability ranging between medium and high. Users in Cincinnati, Columbus and Dayton noted decreasing popularity of generic extended-release oxycodone tablets. Continuing increases in abuse of methadone tablets and wafers were noted across the state, with estimated moderate availability of the drug. Street availability of Duragesic® (fentanyl transdermal system) and Dilaudid® (hydromorphone), although limited, was noted in most areas of the state. Cases of Suboxone® (buprenorphine and naloxone) diversion were reported by focus group participants in Dayton, Cincinnati, Toledo, and by the London and Richfield BCI & I crime lab professionals.

Prices of most prescription analgesics, including hydrocodone, oxycodone, and methadone, range between \$0.50 and \$1 per milligram of opioid content. For example, a 40-milligram OxyContin® tablet may sell for about \$20 in Dayton and Cincinnati, but up to \$40 in Akron, Athens and Toledo.

Prescription opioid abuse continues to be more commonly reported among white individuals from diverse age groups, including teenagers and older adults. Several areas noted an increasing trend of pharmaceutical opioid abuse among young and middle-aged females who had a history of chronic pain issues. Oral ingestion remains the most common method of administration for most pharmaceutical opioids. Intranasal inhalation of crushed OxyContin® tablets was also reported as being common. Reports of intravenous injection were less frequent.

MARIJUANA

- **Marijuana availability and abuse remain high across the state. The perception that marijuana is a safe and socially acceptable drug persists among diverse groups of users.**

Availability of marijuana remains high across the state. Users continue to report a wide variety of marijuana types available, with those of lower quality selling for \$75-\$125 per ounce and the highest quality selling for up to \$200-\$400 per ounce. Treatment providers, users, and law enforcement professionals continue to report widespread use of marijuana among diverse populations. The perception that marijuana is a socially acceptable, low-risk drug persists among users.

METHAMPHETAMINE

- **Most areas of the state reported continuing decreases in methamphetamine availability and abuse.**

Continuing decreases in methamphetamine availability were noted by users in most urban areas, although crime labs in Dayton, Toledo, and BCI & I in London and Bowling Green indicated medium to high availability of the drug. Powder remained the most commonly seen form in most areas of the state except Columbus, where glass-type methamphetamine was more prevalent, and Toledo, where methamphetamine was more commonly found in tablets with MDMA. Reports about methamphetamine purity varied across the state from low in Toledo and Akron to high in Cleveland and in areas covered by BCI & I London. Smoking remains one of the most common methods of methamphetamine administration. Injection of methamphetamine was reported in Cincinnati, Dayton, and Toledo. Methamphetamine use continues to be more commonly reported among white individuals between 20 and 30 years of age. A continuing trend of methamphetamine abuse among gay males was reported in the Columbus area. Participants in several areas of the state noted that some users tend to switch to crack cocaine when methamphetamine becomes less available to them.

PHARMACEUTICAL TRANQUILIZERS

- **Most areas of the state continue to report moderate to high availability of benzodiazepines. Cases of Seroquel® abuse were reported in the Dayton and Toledo areas.**

Xanax® (alprazolam) remained one of the most commonly abused pharmaceutical drugs with estimated street availability moderate to high in most areas except Stark County, where availability decreased from high to low, according to crime lab data. Availability of other benzodiazepines, such as Klonopin® (clonazepam) and Valium® (diazepam), ranged from low in the Toledo and Canton areas to

high in Dayton, Columbus and Cincinnati. Benzodiazepines are typically abused in combination with a wide variety of other drugs, including alcohol, marijuana, and other non-prescribed pharmaceuticals. Several areas of the state reported a common trend of benzodiazepine abuse among heroin users.

Previous Akron area reports about Seroquel® (quetiapine fumarate) abuse were confirmed by users and probation officers in the Dayton and Toledo areas. Seroquel® is not classified as a controlled substance, and is prescribed to treat symptoms of schizophrenia and bipolar disorder. Seroquel® is abused for its sedative properties, and it usually sells for \$1-\$3 per tablet.

HALLUCINOGENS

- **Availability of MDMA/Ecstasy remained high in the Toledo area, increased in Cleveland but decreased in the Cincinnati area. Availability of LSD and psilocybin mushrooms remained low in most areas of the state. An increase in PCP abuse was noted in the Cleveland area.**

Reports of MDMA/Ecstasy availability and abuse continue to fluctuate across the state. High availability was reported in Cleveland and Toledo. Moderate availability was reported in Cincinnati, Columbus, and by the crime labs in BCI & I Richfield and London. Low availability was reported by Dayton and Canton crime labs.

According to users, psilocybin mushroom and LSD availability was low in most areas of the state. Crime labs in BCI&I Bowling Green, Richfield and London reported higher availability of psilocybin.

PCP availability increased from low to moderate in the Cleveland area. A slight increase in PCP availability was also noted by crime lab professionals in Dayton, Canton, and BCI & I Richfield.

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