

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

Highlights From CEWG June 2001 Advance Report:

Heroin Use Spreading to Suburban and Rural Communities; Use of Club Drugs Increasing

The Community Epidemiology Work Group (CEWG) is a NIDA-sponsored network of epidemiologists and researchers that meets twice a year to discuss current and emerging substance abuse problems. The 50th CEWG meeting was held in Rockville, Maryland this past June. Data gathered from the meeting exemplified the similarities and the diversity of drug abuse patterns through the CEWG areas, as well as trends that have emerged over time. Following are the highlights from the meeting.

- While remaining at high levels, indicators of **cocaine** and **crack** use decreased or were stable in the majority of CEWG areas. In New York City, “cocaine trends continued to show declines, but the drug still accounts for major problems . . . (e.g., deaths, ED mentions, treatment admissions, arrests)” (p. 7).
- **Heroin** indicators increased in 15 CEWG areas. Heroin use appears to be spreading to younger populations as well as to suburban and rural communities. The purity of heroin is reaching peak levels nationwide. In South Florida, “heroin is at its highest purity level (23 percent) and its lowest price (\$1.03 per milligram)” (p. 13).
- **Marijuana** indicators leveled off in 1999-2000 in 14 CEWG areas, but continued to rise in seven CEWG areas. Substantial proportions of marijuana users are under age 18 in some areas (p. 6).
- Club drugs, including **MDMA (ecstasy)**, **GHB**, and **ketamine**, are being abused by small but growing numbers in many CEWG areas. Ecstasy indicators increased in 13 CEWG areas while indicators of ketamine and GHB use increased in nine areas (p. 6).
- Indicators of prescription narcotic drug use, while relatively small compared with other drug categories, continue to increase in urban, suburban, and rural areas. **Hydrocodone** and **oxycodone** are being used as heroin substitutes and are being abused by long-term prescription drug users, youth, and young adults (p. 6).

NOTE: The 21 CEWG areas reporting at this meeting were Atlanta, Baltimore, Boston, Chicago, Denver, Detroit, Honolulu, Los Angeles, Miami, Minneapolis, Newark, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Phoenix, St. Louis, San Diego, San Francisco, Seattle, Texas, and Washington, D.C.

SOURCE: National Institute on Drug Abuse, Community Epidemiology Work Group, “Epidemiologic Trends in Drug Abuse Advance Report,” June 2001. Available online at www.nida.nih.gov/CEWG/AdvancedRep/601ADV/601adv.html.