

A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

CESAR Introduces New Publication for Disseminating Local Drug Trends: First DEWS County Snapshot Highlights Baltimore City

Using recent data from Maryland's innovative Drug Early Warning System (DEWS), CESAR has developed a new publication series, the *DEWS County Snapshot*, that integrates qualitative and quantitative data to describe current substance abuse trends at the county level. Other states may wish to adopt a similar strategy to interpret and disseminate local drug trends.

The *Snapshot* utilizes findings from DEWS' current field data collection projects to supplement traditional, less timely indicators of drug use and provide a current picture of a county's drug trends. Two to four weeks before the publication of a *Snapshot*, DEWS staff conduct interviews with arrested youth (Juvenile Offender Population Urinalysis Screening project) and knowledgeable professionals (Drug Scan project) in each county about their perceptions of current local drug trends. These anecdotal reports from the field are then interpreted in the context of other county indicators monitored by DEWS staff. Following are highlights from the inaugural issue, *Substance Abuse Trends in Baltimore City*.

- Baltimore City juvenile offenders report that youth are using ecstasy in a variety of locations while in the past it was used primarily at raves, indicating that ecstasy may be moving into mainstream use in Baltimore City.
- Methadone overdoses have increased over the last five years in Baltimore City and in Maryland overall. Similar increases have been reported in other states.
- Drug Scan interviewees report that oxycodone abuse is rising, sometimes as a substitute for heroin. From 1998 to 2001 there has been a 48% increase in Baltimore City treatment admissions who mentioned "other opiates" as a problem, a category that includes oxycodone.

The integration of the recent DEWS interview results with the more extensive, but typically older, quantitative indicator data provides a rare opportunity to detect emerging drug trends. The goal of the *Snapshot* is to alert readers to possible changes in drug use that, if substantiated, can form the basis for developing effective interventions and public policy.

SOURCE: Drug Early Warning System, *The DEWS County Snapshot: Substance Abuse Trends in Baltimore City*, Volume 1, Issue 1, November 2002. For more information, contact Erin Artigiani at erin@cesar.umd.edu.

Want to Receive the Latest DEWS County Snapshot?

***DEWS County Snapshots* are available online (www.dewsonline.org). To receive the *Snapshot* by mail, call (301-403-8329) or email (dews@cesar.umd.edu) DEWS.**

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