

## A Weekly FAX from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland at College Park

### *National Drug Abuse Trends Discussed at Recent Drug Epidemiology Meeting*

The National Institute on Drug Abuse's Community Epidemiology Work Group (CEWG) is a network of epidemiologists and other researchers who meet twice a year to discuss current and emerging substance abuse trends across the United States as well as internationally. At these meetings, CEWG members present both quantitative and qualitative indicator data from their region and exchange observations on existing and potential substance abuse problems. Following are some of the national findings from the 38th CEWG meeting, held June 13-16, 1995:

- While **crack cocaine** use has stabilized or declined in many metropolitan areas, "a field report from Chicago reports that crack cocaine (dissolved with lemon or pickle juice, vinegar, or Kool-aid) also is being injected because of the difficulty in obtaining powder cocaine."
- A younger generation of **heroin** users is emerging who are "more likely to snort heroin, sometimes in connection with the grunge/club scene, and come from all socio-economic groups." In contrast, "the older generation of addicts is more likely to inject heroin, to use it with cocaine, and to lead marginal and criminal lives."
- **Marijuana** indicators continue to rise, especially among adolescents, for whom "it is easier to get than is alcohol."
- **Methamphetamine** use is rising in western and West Coast cities, especially among younger users who feel that its high is longer, its purity more consistent and its price comparable to the price of crack cocaine.
- Heroin users in Chicago and Detroit have discovered a cheaper alternative to a speedball-- combining heroin with the stimulant **methylphenidate** (Ritalin). Ritalin is a prescription drug used in the treatment of attention deficit disorder. "There are [also] scattered reports that its presence and relative accessibility in school clinics are resulting in use by youth."

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from data from National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), Community Epidemiology Work Group (CEWG), "Epidemiologic Trends in Drug Abuse: Executive Summary," Forthcoming. To receive a copy of the Executive Summary, contact the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) at 1-800-729-6686.

#### EASTERN SHORE EPIDEMIOLOGY WORK GROUP MEETING TO BE HELD

CESAR and the Talbot County Drug Epidemiology Network (DEN), will be co-hosting an Eastern Shore Epidemiology Work Group meeting on Friday, September 22, 1995, in Easton, Maryland. The purpose of this meeting is to examine data on substance use in the Eastern Shore counties and to discuss the benefits of forming additional Drug Epidemiology Networks on the Eastern Shore. If you would like to share your knowledge of local drug abuse trends and patterns with other professionals from Eastern Shore counties, contact Wanda Lauer at CESAR (301-403-8329).

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