

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

**University of Maryland at College Park**

***Assessing Substance Use Among the Homeless: Similar Results Obtained from Interactive Voice Response Telephone Interviews and In-Person Interviews***

A recent study examined the feasibility of assessing the need for substance abuse treatment among the homeless by using cellular telephones and an interactive voice response (IVR) system. Interviews were conducted with homeless persons at eight sites (four emergency shelters, three meal sites, and one health care clinic) in Cleveland, Ohio. Outreach workers used cellular phones to call into a computerized interview system and then gave the phone to the respondent, who replied to each question by touch-tone. The respondent returned to the same site one week later and was reinterviewed by both the IVR system and an outreach worker. A hair sample was collected and analyzed to verify recent drug use. All of the IVR interview results were comparable to those of the in-person interviews (80 to 95% agreement rate), with a tendency for persons to disclose more drug use in the IVR interview. The authors conclude that the IVR system can be used as a low-cost method of screening difficult-to-reach populations to determine those needing additional assessment. For more information, contact Dr. Sonia Alemagno at 216-687-5244.

**Percent Agreement Between Self Reports of Drug Use Obtained from Interactive Voice Response Interviews and In-Person Interviews**

(n=157)

	Percent Agreement
<b>Marijuana</b>	81%
<b>Powdered Cocaine</b>	80%
<b>Crack Cocaine</b>	91%
<b>Heroin/Opiates</b>	95%

SOURCES: Adapted by CESAR from data from Sonia Alemagno et al., "Assessing Substance Abuse Treatment Needs among the Homeless: A Telephone-Based Interactive Voice Response System," *American Journal of Public Health*, 1996, 86 (11):1626-1628.

**\$17 MILLION AVAILABLE FROM CDC FOR HIV/AIDS PREVENTION GRANTS**

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has \$17 million in grant funds for nonprofit community-based organizations serving populations at high risk of contracting HIV/AIDS. To receive an application form, call 404-332-4561. The application deadline is January 6, 1997.

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