

Drug Early Warning System

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Working Together to Identify Emerging Drug Trends in Maryland

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OPUS Intake Results Indicate that Marijuana is the Drug Most Likely to be Detected Among Youth Offenders in Baltimore City, and Carroll and Baltimore Counties

The OPUS Intake Study monitors drug use by youth offenders through interviews and urine tests at Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) intake offices across the State. About one-quarter to one-half of the youth in the first three jurisdictions studied tested positive for any drug, primarily marijuana (See Table). OPUS interviewers at all three sites also found that marijuana was the drug most frequently used by young people. Nearly half (44%) of the youth tested in Baltimore City were positive for marijuana, more than double the rate in Carroll or Baltimore counties. Surprisingly, no opiates (heroin) were found in the Baltimore City youth. Youth told interviewers that they consider heroin to be "an adult thing." A study of adult arrestees in Baltimore City (CESAR FAX, Vol. 7, Issue 22) reported that 37% of males and 48% of females tested positive for opiates.

Percentage of Youth Offenders Testing Positive for Drugs, by DJJ Intake Center, May to December 1999

	Carroll County (N= 71)	Baltimore County (N= 146)	Baltimore City (N=48)
Marijuana	17%	19%	44%
Cocaine	4%	2%	0%
Opiates	3%	2%	0%
Amphetamines	8%	4%	0%
Any Drug (of 10)	28%	23%	44%

NOTE: Urine specimens were analyzed for 10 drugs: amphetamines, barbiturates, benzodiazapines, cocaine, marijuana, methadone, methaqualone, opiates, PCP, and propoxyphene.

SOURCE: Center for Substance Abuse Research, Offender Population Urinalysis Screening (OPUS) program, Maryland Drug Early Warning System (DEWS). For more information, contact Erin Artigiani of CESAR at 301-403-8329. The complete intake study findings for each site are posted on the DEWS website at <http://www.cesar.umd.edu/dews.htm>.

OPUS: Intake Study

The Offender Population Urinalysis Screening (OPUS) program was established to monitor drug use among Maryland's juvenile offenders through voluntary and anonymous interviewing and drug testing of youths at Maryland's Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) intake and detention facilities. OPUS began data collection in May 1999 with juveniles being processed by DJJ intake staff.

The Maryland Drug Early Warning System (DEWS) is an initiative of the Cabinet Council on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, Lt. Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Chair, and is supported by a grant from the Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention to the Center for Substance Abuse Research (CESAR), University of Maryland. The DEWS Fax is published monthly. 301-403-8329 • 1-877-234-DEWS (toll-free) • 301-403-8342 (fax) • dews@cesar.umd.edu • www.cesar.umd.edu/dews.htm