
St. Mary's County OPUS Report Now Available: *Youth Offenders Think Marijuana Use Is "No Big Deal," Report Uncertainty About Ecstasy Composition*

As part of the Offender Population Urine Screening (OPUS) program, 50 youths processed in the St. Mary's County Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Intake Office were interviewed and tested by urinalysis for illicit drug use between November 2000 and May 2001. Following are report highlights about the three most frequently discussed drugs—marijuana, ecstasy, and cocaine.

- Just over one-fourth (26%) of offenders tested positive for at least one drug, primarily marijuana (20%).
- As in other Maryland counties, **marijuana** was reported to be the most easily obtainable and popular drug. Many youths reported marijuana being sold and used at school. Most youths reported that marijuana use was "no big deal" but considered it a problem because of the numbers and frequency of people using it.
- **Ecstasy** was reported to be available and prevalent in St. Mary's County. While youths could list many names of ecstasy (e.g., Donald Ducks, Fishies, Rainbows, Triple Stacks), most were unsure of the drug's exact chemical composition.
- Powder and crack **cocaine** were frequently mentioned as drugs that were easy to obtain. Crack cocaine was reported to be used by older people, while powder cocaine was reported to be used by youths who either snorted it or mixed it with marijuana.

A full copy of the St. Mary's OPUS report is available on the DEWS website at www.cesar.umd.edu/dews.htm.

NOTE: OPUS was established to monitor drug use among Maryland's juvenile offenders through voluntary and anonymous interviewing and drug testing at Maryland's Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) intake and detention facilities. OPUS began collecting data from juveniles processed by DJJ intake site staff in May 1999. OPUS drug use patterns may not be typical of the general youth population in this county. However, prior research indicates that drug use by juvenile offenders may provide advance warning of epidemics in the general population.

SOURCE: Maryland Drug Early Warning System (DEWS), Offender Population Urinalysis Screening program (OPUS), Center for Substance Abuse Research. For more information, contact Erin Artigiani of CESAR at 301-403-8329.

Do You Want to Receive a Parents/Caregivers Publication?

DEWS is considering creating a new publication directed toward parents and caregivers about youth substance abuse and its prevention and treatment. If you would be interested in receiving such a publication, or if you have ideas or suggestions for topics, please contact DEWS by email at DEWS@cesar.umd.edu, fax at 301-403-8342, or phone at 877-234-DEWS.