

## **Cecil County OPUS Report Now Available:**

### ***Continued Popularity of Marijuana Use; Increasing Use of Ecstasy***

As part of the Offender Population Urine Screening (OPUS) program, 46 youths processed in the Cecil County Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Intake Office were interviewed and tested by urinalysis for illicit drug use between February and August 2000. Following are highlights of the report for the three drugs most frequently discussed by these youth—ecstasy, marijuana, and heroin.

- According to one 17-year-old male, “**Ecstasy** is coming around more often than it used to and it’s staying longer each time.” Several youths in Cecil County reported that ecstasy has grown increasingly popular.
- More than one-fourth (28%) of the youths tested positive for **marijuana**. Youths report that there is no specific age, gender, or social group that uses marijuana. When asked about new trends, youths reported that Killer Weed (KW) is marijuana dipped in embalming fluid. This combination, according to one 15-year-old male, “is like PCP. It makes you feel strong, but high.” (For more information on the use of marijuana, embalming fluid, and PCP, see *CESAR FAX*, Volume 7, Issue 19).
- While youths reported that **heroin** is easy to get in Cecil County, several stated that heroin users belong to a specific social group or reside in one specific town in the county. Most respondents said that they and their friends were scared of heroin, and no youths tested positive for opiates.

A full copy of the Cecil County OPUS report is available on the DEWS website at [www.cesar.umd.edu/dews.htm](http://www.cesar.umd.edu/dews.htm).

NOTE: These 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.

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## **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 collecting data from juveniles processed by DJJ intake site staff in May 1999.