
Prince George's County OPUS Report Now Available: ***Forty Percent of Youth Offenders Test Positive for Marijuana***

Between March and May 2000, 50 youths processed in the Prince George's County Department of Juvenile Justice Intake Office were interviewed and tested by urinalysis for illicit drug use. Following are highlights of the report for the three drugs most frequently discussed by these youth—marijuana, ecstasy, and cocaine.

- Forty percent of the youths tested positive for **marijuana**. This rate is higher than that found in other counties (which have ranged from 17% to 29% positive) and approaches the 44% marijuana-positive rate found among Baltimore City juvenile offenders (see *DEWS Fax*, Volume 2, Issue 10). According to one 16-year-old male, "Everyone smokes it. You see bags lying around the school parking lot."
- More than 50% of white and hispanic youth offenders tested positive for marijuana, compared to 32% of black youth offenders.
- Many youths noted the danger associated with impure **ecstasy** (MDMA) pills. According to one 17-year-old male, "Sometimes they mix in heroin, coke, mescaline, or speed. But there's always some MDMA in the pills."
- The majority of the youths reported that powder and crack cocaine "isn't really popular with high school kids," and they believe these substances are primarily used by older people.

A full copy of the Prince George's County OPUS report is available on the DEWS website at 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.

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.

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