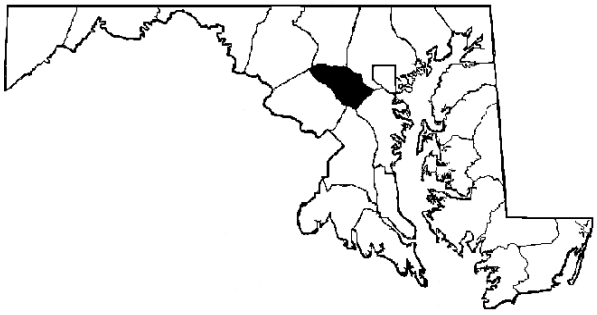
Drug Early Warning System

Working Together to Identify Emerging Drug Trends in Maryland

Juvenile Offender Population Urinalysis Screening Program (OPUS)

Intake Study

Findings from Howard County



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Juvenile OPUS is a component of the DEWS Program. Juvenile OPUS and other findings are disseminated in DEWS Faxes. The DEWS Fax is published monthly. To receive DEWS Faxes, please contact CESAR: 301-403-8329, 1-877-234-DEWS (toll-free), 301-403-8342 (fax), dews@cesar.umd.edu, www.cesar.umd.edu/dews.htm.

Supported by the Cabinet Council on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, Lt. Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Chair, and the Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention.

ABSTRACT

Seventy youths processed in the Howard County Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ) Intake Office were interviewed and asked to provide a urine specimen between June and August 2000. Eighteen percent of the tested juveniles were positive for a drug. Youths reported that marijuana is the most widely used and easily obtained drug. There was a consensus that ecstasy (MDMA) is becoming increasingly popular. Youths also reported that GHB, also known as "liquid ecstasy," is a new drug in the county.

OPUS is designed to provide insight into emerging drug trends among the juvenile offender population. It should be noted that OPUS drug use patterns may not be typical of the general youth population. However, prior research has indicated that offender urinalysis results provide advance warning of drug epidemics in the general population.

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Juvenile Offender Population Urinalysis Screening (OPUS)

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Juvenile OPUS is one component of Maryland's Drug Early Warning System (DEWS), an initiative of the Cabinet Council on Criminal and Juvenile Justice, Lt. Governor Kathleen Kennedy Townsend, Chair. DEWS is supported by a grant from the Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention.

The Juvenile OPUS Study was implemented by the Center for Substance Abuse Research (CESAR) in June 1998 as a urinalysis monitoring program for juveniles processed by the Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ). The goals of the project are to monitor changes in drug use and to identify emerging drugs of abuse among the juvenile offender population.

The Juvenile OPUS Project takes place in two venues: Intake and Detention. The Intake Study obtains interviews and urine specimens from youths being assessed in DJJ county offices. The Detention Study obtains only urine specimens twice a year from youths newly admitted to DJJ's five detention facilities.

This report presents results from the Intake Study conducted in Howard County between June and August 2000. A final table compares the Howard County urine test results with results from other OPUS Intake Study sites.

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METHODS

- Interviewers requested informed consent from youths (intake referrals and probationers) and their parents.

- Interviewers administered a 10-15 minute, semi-structured interview. The interview provided youths the opportunity to talk about drug use by their peers and in their communities. Youths were not asked about their own drug use.

- A voluntary and anonymous urine specimen was collected and screened for 10 drugs: amphetamines, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, cocaine, marijuana, methadone, methaqualone, opiates, phencyclidine (PCP), and propoxyphene. The amphetamine-positive tests were confirmed for amphetamines, methamphetamines, and phenylpropanolamine.

- A candy bar was offered to respondents as an incentive for participation.

FINDINGS

Response Rates

- 70 of the 72 juveniles approached (97%) agreed to be interviewed.
- 71% (40 males, 10 females) of the interviewed juveniles provided a urine specimen.

Characteristics of Tested Juveniles

- The majority of the tested juveniles were male (80%), white (72%), and 16 or older (58%) (Table 1).
- More than one-third (42%) were charged with a drug-related offense (Table 1).

Table 1
Demographic Characteristics of Interviewed and Tested Respondents

Characteristics	Persons interviewed (N=70)	Persons tested (N=50)	
Gender	%	%	
Male	80	80	
Race/Ethnicity			
White	74	72	
Black	13	12	
Hispanic	3	4	
Other	10	12	
Age			
13 or younger	10	14	
14	9	8	
15	18	20	
16	20	20	} 58%
17 or older	43	38	
Primary Offense*			
Drug-related	43	42	
Property	34	38	
Violent	17	12	
Other	6	8	

* Property offenses include arson, breaking and entering, burglary, destruction of property, larceny/theft, stolen property, stolen vehicle, and trespassing. Violent offenses include assault, attempted murder, carjacking, homicide, manslaughter, robbery, sexual assault/rape, sex offense, and weapons. Drug-related crimes include drug, tobacco, and alcohol possession and sale, and DUI/DWI. Other offenses include unauthorized use of vehicles, truancy, and public peace.

Source: Center for Substance Abuse Research (CESAR), University of Maryland, College Park, Juvenile OPUS Intake Study Report, February 2001 - Revised.

Urine Test Results

- 18% of youths tested positive for at least one drug, primarily marijuana (Table 2).
- 20% of males and 10% of females tested positive for marijuana (Table 2).
- There were two youths who tested positive for amphetamines. Both youths who tested positive for amphetamines also tested positive for marijuana. One was a 15-year-old male who was taking the prescription medication Adderall and was charged with driving a motor vehicle without a license. The other youth was a 14-year-old male who was taking the prescription medications Dexedrine and Neurontin and was charged with assault. Both were also taking the prescription medication Zoloft (Table 2).
- 16 year old youths were three times as likely (30%) to test positive for any drug than youths under 15 (9%) (Figure 1).

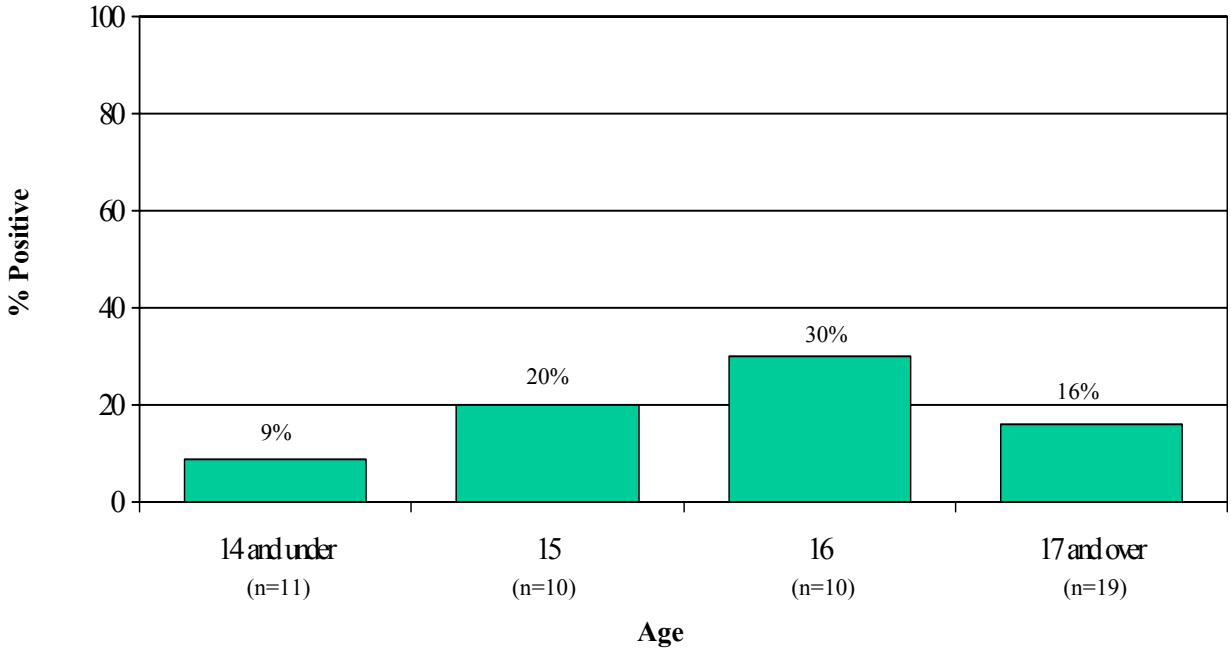
Table 2
Urine Test Results, by Gender

	Males (N=40)		Females (N=10)		Total (N=50)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Positive For:						
Marijuana	8	20	1	10	9	18
Cocaine	0	0	0	0	0	0
Opiates	0	0	0	0	0	0
Amphetamines	2	5	0	0	2	4
Any Drug (of 10)	8	20%	1	10%	9	18%

Note: Urine specimens were analyzed for 10 drugs: amphetamines, barbiturates, benzodiazepines, cocaine, marijuana, methadone, methaqualone, opiates, PCP, and propoxyphene. The amphetamine-positive tests were confirmed for amphetamines, methamphetamines, and phenylpropanolamine.

Source: Center for Substance Abuse Research (CESAR), University of Maryland, College Park, Juvenile OPUS Intake Study Report, February 2001 - Revised.

Figure 1
Percentage Positive for Any Drug, by Age



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This section presents juvenile offenders' perceptions of drug use by youths in their schools, neighborhoods, and communities. Drugs are listed in order of those most to least frequently discussed by youths.

Ecstasy (MDMA)

Most youths in Howard County have heard of ecstasy. While it is still used among rave attendees, it has become more socially accepted and is used at parties and at school. Several youths reported that ecstasy may be cut with cocaine, heroin, and other drugs. One 16-year-old male stated, "MDMA is the main ingredient. A lot has coke, heroin, or mescaline in it." A 17-year-old male reported, "It used to be MDMA, but now [there's] less MDMA, and people are throwing in speed." And an 18-year-old male stated, "It's not always cut with the same thing, but it's usually cut with heroin. I've heard of people having *itches*–episodes where someone may have taken some bad stuff, and they start scratching violently and uncontrollably." Youths appear more engaged than fearful about the different mixtures that make up ecstasy.

Marijuana

Most of the interviewed youths stated that marijuana is not harmful. Several youths stated that marijuana use in school has increased. Youths frequently come to school high, get high in school, and obtain marijuana at school. Youths reported practices of spraying marijuana with Raid or mixing it with "angel dust" for $50 per joint. The use of embalming fluid with marijuana was reported in Washington, D.C. Also, *KGB* and *Love Boat* are reportedly marijuana laced with PCP. *Hydro, Chronic, Christmas Bud, KB*, and *Northern Lights* were reported brand names.

Powder and Crack Cocaine

An 18-year-old male stated that snorting powder cocaine is more accepted than the use of heroin or crack. A 17-year-old female said that a lot of her friends between ages 16 and 22 use powder cocaine. Some youths reported that their peers do not really use cocaine or crack, while one 13-year-old female stated, "Kids around my age start with marijuana. Then, when they are around 17 or 18, they start using crack."

Heroin

There does not seem to be a lot of heroin use in Howard County, though many youths know of people who use it. They report that users smoke, snort, and shoot. Two youths reported that heroin has the same effects as ecstasy. One 15-year-old male stated, "I haven't seen it much, but I know you have to go to Baltimore to get it."

LSD (Acid)/Psychedelic Mushrooms

Some Howard County youths believed that LSD and psychedelic mushrooms are increasing in popularity along with ecstasy. Youths believe that "shrooms" are safer to use than LSD because they are organic. Youths expressed different opinions about the availability of LSD and mushrooms.

Prescription Drugs

Youths reported that prescription pills are crushed and snorted or taken intravenously, not orally. Several youths reported the use of Ritalin and Adderall. The effects, one interviewee stated, are similar to taking speed. Other youths reported that Percocet is the most commonly taken prescription drug. One 17-year-old male stated, "It's supposed to be like this lazy, drunk feeling, like high and drunk mixed."

Inhalants

Nitrous oxide was reported by a small number of youth to be popular at concerts. One 17-year-old female reported that youths "crack the cannister and fill balloons up with [the] contents." A 16-year-old male stated that "you get high for like 5-10 seconds and fall out."

GHB

Also known as liquid ecstasy, GHB was reported by one 15-year-old male as a date rape drug. "It's new around here...I heard you get really messed up when you take it; two drops is the equivalent of drinking a lot of beers." Many youths stated that they had heard of the drug and were aware of its effects but knew little about its cost.

Other drug trends

Ketamine (*Special K*) was reported by several youths as an increasingly popular rave drug. It is snorted or injected. Youths also mentioned opium as a drug that can be mixed with marijuana and smoked in blunts. An 18-year-old male reported that opium is the residue of a poppy plant; it is not as potent as heroin, yet mildly addicting. Crystal meth was reported by a 15-year-old female and a 16-year-old female as an increasingly popular drug. Speed was mentioned by a few youths, though with greater frequency speed was mentioned as a desirable drug for ecstasy pills to contain.

Comparisons Of Urinalysis Results For Males and Females Across Nine OPUS Intake Sites

Table 3 presents comparisons of the urinalysis results across nine OPUS intake sites studied between May 1999 and August 2000. The complete Intake Study reports for these counties are available from CESAR on the web at www.cesar.umd.edu or by contacting CESAR directly (301-403-8329).

- The percentage testing positive for any drug ranged from 18% in Howard County to 44% in Baltimore City (Table 3).
- Marijuana was the most prevalent drug, ranging from 17% in Carroll County to 44% in Baltimore City (Table 3).
- Cocaine and opiates were rarely detected (Table 3).
- The percentage testing positive for amphetamines ranged from 0% in Baltimore City and Frederick County to 9% in Cecil County, with Howard County testing positive at 4% (Table 3).

Table 3
Urine Test Results for Males and Females,
by Site*

	Carroll County (N=66) July 1999	Baltimore County (N=147) Oct 1999	Baltimore City (N=48) Dec 1999	Harford County (N=51) Mar 2000	Montgomery County (N=50) Mar 2000	P.G. County (N=50) May 2000	Frederick County (N=47) Jun 2000	Cecil County (N=46) Aug 2000	**Howard County (N=50) Aug 2000**
Positive For:	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	**%**
Marijuana	17	19	44	31	18	40	28	28	**18**
Cocaine	5	2	0	0	0	0	0	2	**0**
Opiates	3	2	0	2	0	0	2	0	**0**
Amphetamines	8	4	0	6	4	2	0	9	**4**
Any Drug (of 10)	27%	23%	44%	37%	22%	40%	28%	35%	**18%**

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

*The full Intake Study Findings reported in this table are available through CESAR on the web at www.cesar.umd.edu or by contacting CESAR directly (301-403-8329).

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