

DEWS COUNTY SNAPSHOT

CHARLES COUNTY

JULY 2003

DRUG USE IN CHARLES COUNTY: OVERVIEW

- Adult treatment admission rates in Charles County have been below state rates for the past 5 fiscal years. In fiscal year 2002, Charles County had 1,111 adult treatment admissions for every 100,000 residents, while the State rate was over 1,280 admissions per 100,000.
- Juvenile treatment admission rates for the county have also been below state rates since 1999. (In 1998, Charles County rates matched state rates for juvenile treatment admissions.) In fiscal year 2002, the county had 473 juvenile treatment admissions for every 100,000 juvenile residents, while the State rate was 488 admissions per 100,000.
- Alcohol, cigarettes and marijuana were the top three substances reportedly (currently) used by 8th, 10th and 12th graders in the county in 2001. Among 6th graders, the top three currently used substances were alcohol (5 percent), inhalants (3 percent) and designer drugs (1 percent). Fifteen percent of 6th graders reported having tried alcohol at least once, and 6 percent reported having tried inhalants at least once.
- In 2001, Charles County 12th graders (11 percent) reported more current use of amphetamines than 12th graders statewide (6 percent).

NOTEWORTHY FINDINGS

Alcohol Abuse in the County

The Data

- Among Charles County adults, alcohol was the most frequently mentioned substance of abuse on admission to treatment. Slightly over 85 percent of adults entering treatment in 2002 mentioned alcohol, compared to 62 percent statewide.
- Nearly 4 out of 5 juveniles (79 percent) entering treatment mentioned alcohol abuse in fiscal year 2002.
- Half of Charles County high school seniors reported current use of alcohol in 2001; 42 percent of sophomores reported current alcohol use, and 23 percent of 8th graders reported it. (Less than 5 percent of 6th graders reported current use of alcohol.)
- More than 31 percent of high school seniors reported current binge drinking in 2001, almost exactly the same percentage as statewide.

- More than a quarter of high school sophomores reported current binge drinking in the same year, compared to less than 8 percent of 8th graders and nearly 2 percent of 6th graders in the county.

What OPUS Juveniles in the County Are Saying

- Juveniles interviewed by OPUS staff reported that alcohol use in Charles County sometimes began as early as age 12.
- When asked what types of alcohol were popular among county youth, one OPUS juvenile responded “the cheapest kind--\$10 vodka or 30 packs.”
- The same contact reported that beer was favored by youth because it was easier to get, although some youth enjoyed “fancy drinking” (e.g., Goldschlager liqueur, whisky, and other hard liquors).
- OPUS youth reported that marijuana and PCP were sometimes used with alcohol. According to one youth, alcohol “enhances the effect” of marijuana.

What Drug Scan Contacts in the County Are Saying

- A Drug Scan contact in education reported that kids who had alcoholic parents appeared to use drugs and alcohol more than other kids.
- According to another contact, some kids arrived at school intoxicated, and others brought alcohol to school.
- A Drug Scan contact in education reported that kids talked about alcohol “all the time,” and they did not seem to mind if teachers or other adults (at school) overheard them. According to the contact, the kids “bragged” about their alcohol use.
- Drug Scan reports were that adolescent girls in the county preferred beverages that didn’t “taste like booze” (e.g., Jack Daniels Lemonade), while guys preferred straight shots and “lots of beer.”
- Drug Scan contacts reported that many 9th and 10th grade students with high grades did not drink alcohol, but (otherwise) alcohol users appeared to be getting younger.
- Another Drug Scan contact reported that alcohol was easy for juveniles to get, and that they bought it from liquor stores in some areas, especially ones with drive-through windows.

Marijuana in Charles County

The Data

- More than 38 percent of Charles County adults admitted to treatment in fiscal year 2002 cited marijuana as a substance of abuse—the second most frequently mentioned substance by this population.
- Among juveniles entering treatment the same year, nearly nine out of ten (approximately 90 percent) mentioned marijuana.
- Nearly one-quarter (24 percent) of Charles County 12th graders, and nearly one-fifth (19 percent) of 10th graders reported current use of marijuana in 2001.

- Among 6th and 8th graders in the county, current marijuana use ranged from less than ½ of 1 percent to nearly 8 percent, respectively.

What OPUS Juveniles in the County Are Saying

- OPUS juveniles reported that marijuana was the most popular and available substance among youth in the county.
- Among OPUS youth (n=35) who provided urine specimens, 5 tested positive for marijuana.
- OPUS youth identified many types of marijuana available in the area, including schwag, kind bud (also called KB), hydro (also called dro), purple haze, pink haze, silver haze, blueberry, fire, chronic, Chocolate Thai (in DC), Chocolate Khan, red hair, white rhino, and Maui Wowie. One youth stated, “people grow them or get them from other people.”
- When asked to distinguish among varieties of marijuana, an OPUS juvenile stated, “They say that when you exhale purple haze, the smoke is purple. KB is one of the highest highs you can get. Dirt weed is the weakest form.”
- OPUS youth maintained that marijuana prices varied. Prices for the cheapest marijuanas (regular, schwag, or dank) were \$5 for a “nick” (“nickel”), \$10 for a “dime,” \$15 to \$20 for a “dub” (“double”), \$25 for a quarter (of an ounce), and \$60 to \$100 for an ounce.
- In response to a question about how to grow chronic, a juvenile stated, “One person uses the corner of the room (in a basement) and has white panels and bright light. Another person I know has special plants that he cares for everyday.”
- One youth reported that marijuana users might “put crack on weed in a blunt, called a ‘primo’.”

What Drug Scan Contacts in the County Are Saying

- Drug Scan contacts reported that students had been “busted” for possession and intent to distribute marijuana on a local school campus.
- Other Drug Scan reports were that marijuana use appeared in some cases to begin prior to high school, and that its use was “universal” in terms of demographics.
- Marijuana was commonly smoked in pipes, joints, and blunts, according to professionals interviewed by Drug Scan staff. One contact stated, “They don’t know the purity of what they are getting. (They) assume it is your grandmother’s marijuana and it is not.”
- Contacts reported that marijuana was obtained on the streets, at the mall, and at school.

Cocaine in the County

The Data

- In fiscal year 2002, cocaine was the third most frequently mentioned substance of abuse by county adults. More than one-third (approximately 34 percent) of adults entering treatment cited cocaine/crack, compared to 42 percent statewide.

- Approximately 9 percent of juveniles in Charles County reported cocaine/crack abuse at admission to treatment in 2002, compared to 6 percent statewide.
- Nearly 4 percent of county 10th graders reported current use of cocaine or crack in 2001, compared to approximately 2 percent of 12th graders. Among 8th graders, slightly over 2 percent reported current use of crack, and 1 percent reported current use of other forms of cocaine. Current use of cocaine/crack was reported by less than 1 percent of 6th graders.

What OPUS Juveniles in the County Are Saying

- OPUS youth reports conflicted as to the age of users on initiating crack use. According to one juvenile, crack cocaine use might begin around age 16 or 17. Another reported that the youngest user was “40, but young people sell it.” A third youth stated that age didn’t matter—“it depends on what friends you have— younger or older.”
- One juvenile described “creative ways of smoking” crack. According to the youth, a car’s antenna could be used to smoke crack. The juvenile stated that the antenna was hollow, and a rock could be put on top of one hole and smoked through the opposite end.
- A youth reported that crack resembled little pebbles or crystals, and was yellowish brown or translucent white. “Baby powder,” “coke,” “snow,” “crack,” “butter,” and “them rocks” were reported to be slang terms used for crack.
- None of the 35 OPUS juveniles who participated in urinalyses tested positive for cocaine in any form.

What Drug Scan Contacts in the County Are Saying

- Drug Scan contacts reported that crack use was “contained but not eradicated.”
- Another contact stated that crack was available and “almost as easy to get as alcohol.” Crack dealing was common at a local motel, according to this contact.

Heroin and Other Opiates in the County

The Data

- More than 6 percent of adults in the county mentioned abuse of heroin on admission to treatment in 2002, and more than 5 percent mentioned other opiates.
- Among juveniles, 1 percent of those entering treatment mentioned abuse of other opiates, and none mentioned heroin.
- Current use of heroin ranged from zero percent of 6th graders to 1 percent of 12th graders in 2001.
- Overdose deaths in the county increased 600 percent (from 1 to 7) between 1998 and 2002. The majority of deaths (86 percent) in 2002 were narcotics-related.
- Current use of narcotics (e.g., Codeine, morphine, methadone, Percodan) was reported by nearly 6 percent of 12th graders in the county, while current narcotics use by 6th, 8th and 10th graders increased by age from less than 1 percent to slightly over 3 percent.

What OPUS Juveniles in the County Are Saying

- Although a few youth in the county reported that heroin was available and used by juveniles, none of the OPUS youth who provided urine specimens tested positive for opiates of any kind.
- A Drug Scan contact as well as an OPUS juvenile interviewed by CESAR staff referred to the use of *Triple C* by youth. The Drug Scan contact speculated that the substance was Tylenol with codeine, while the OPUS youth reported that the term (*Triple C*) stood for “cough, cold and congestion” and was usually Coricidan, a medication that contains DXM.

What Drug Scan Contacts in the County Are Saying

- According to Drug Scan contacts, OxyContin was a subject of interest among young students. This contact reported that adults have overheard kids talking about it in school. Also, there was a recent overdose death in the home of “drug users.” (The individual who died was not a student in the contact’s school.)
- Treatment professionals stated that use of OxyContin was “on the rise, but has begun to taper off.” Credit was given to local pharmacists who worked closely with local physicians who prescribed the drug.
- Users of OxyContin were described by Drug Scan contacts as white, male and middle class, with a history of alcohol and marijuana use.

Juvenile Hallucinogens Abuse in Charles County

The Data

- Slightly more than 9 percent of juveniles admitted to treatment in the county in fiscal year 2002 mentioned abuse of hallucinogens, compared to less than 7 percent statewide.
- In 2001, current use of other hallucinogens (e.g., mescaline, ‘shrooms) was reported by 3 percent or less of all 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th graders in the county.

What OPUS Juveniles in the County Are Saying

- OPUS youth who were interviewed reported that LSD (acid) was available in the county in several forms, including liquid, paper, sugar pills or gum.
- One juvenile stated, “Kids drop it on their tongue or in their eye—don’t know if effects are different.”
- Another youth stated that acid was available as “a white strip with 10 little squares,” while another described it as “little cubes (like dice) and powder” that users “lick and press to (their) foreheads or (they) just eat it.”
- Among 6th, 8th, 10th and 12th graders in 2001, current use of LSD increased by age from less than 1 percent to less than 4 percent.
- Psychedelic mushrooms (‘shrooms) were frequently described as both popular and available in Charles County. Youth reported that ‘shrooms could be obtained from dealers, picked from cow dung, or grown by individuals.

- An OPUS youth stated, “Some boy told me how to grow it. It comes from cow manure, and mushrooms grow under it. It comes from bacteria.”
- Another youth reported on the effects of using ‘shrooms with PCP, stating that users “see stuff and can’t feel anything. With LSD—hallucinate for a lot longer and stronger hallucinations.”
- A variety of ways to consume ‘shrooms were reported. One youth said, “Dip in chocolate and eat them, or make tea, or put in food.” Another reported that it was better to eat them because they would then enter the user’s “system” more quickly.
- When asked what kinds of ‘shrooms were available, one youth responded, “The kind that grows in cow fields—that have polka dots—and ones people grow themselves. One’s white and one’s brownish.”
- Another youth reported on the availability of chocolate covered ‘shroom capsules. The youth said that users “swallow (the capsules) with water.”
- When asked at what age youth began experimenting with psychedelic mushrooms, OPUS juveniles said ages 14 or 15.

Ecstasy and Amphetamines in the County

The Data

- Approximately 7 percent of county 10th and 12th graders reported current use of designer drugs (e.g., MDMA, ecstasy) in 2001.
- Approximately 11 percent of Charles County 12th graders reported current use of amphetamines in 2001, compared to approximately 6 percent of 12th graders statewide.

What OPUS Juveniles in the County Are Saying

- Commenting on the popularity of ecstasy, a juvenile interviewed by OPUS staff stated, “It’s bigger; people talk about it more.”
- Types of ecstasy available in the county, according to OPUS youth, included *Clover, Rolls Royce, Triple Stack, Pikachu, Gold Fish, Superman, Omegas, Mercedes* and *Sponge Bob*.
- One OPUS juvenile reported that ecstasy users “snort it, shoot it, swallow it, or even stick it up their butt.”
- Another youth stated, “Alcohol (liquor—not beer), cough syrup, and ecstasy [combined] was called “syzurp.”
- Interviewed youth reported that ecstasy use sometimes began as young as middle school age, and that it has moved past the rave scene into the mainstream culture. One youth said, “All different kinds of people do drugs—people you wouldn’t expect.”
- OPUS youth reported that speed was available in pill form from dealers, or from “people (who) sell their prescriptions . . . people who are depressed.”

- One youth reported that crystal meth was available in the county. The youth reported that the substance looked like white crystals, and that cocaine might be used with it.
- Another youth described a variety of (pill) sizes available: “small pills—micro—to big pills.” This youth reported that the only difference between sizes was that “the big ones take longer to get out of your body and (the) smaller is quicker.”

What Drug Scan Contacts in the County Are Saying

- Drug Scan contacts reported that ecstasy had become more prevalent in the past 2 years, and that it was easy to obtain.
- One contact reported that 3 student suicides were believed by some to have been associated with use of ecstasy.
- Chronic attendance problems (by 12th graders) were attributed to ecstasy use by at least one Drug Scan contact.
- The contact reported that juvenile ecstasy users tended to be white, older, and often more affluent than other students.
- Drug Scan contacts reported that the substance was easy to obtain from student peers, on the street, in housing projects, the mall, or (occasionally) even at school.
- Treatment contacts reported that there had been little change in ecstasy use in recent months, and that it was still readily available locally.

PCP in Charles County

The Data

- Among adults entering treatment in the county in fiscal year 2002, the number of mentions of PCP as a substance of abuse more than doubled over the previous year. In 2001, 19 adults cited PCP, and one year later, 47 adults (4 percent of those entering treatment) cited it.
- Three percent (5) of juveniles entering treatment mentioned PCP abuse, a substantial increase from 2001 and 2000, when only one juvenile mentioned PCP abuse.

What OPUS Juveniles in the County Are Saying

- OPUS juveniles reported that PCP was “a clear liquid that comes in a vial,” and that the slang term “water” is sometimes used for the substance.
- OPUS interviewers received conflicting reports regarding whether a “dipper” was a cigarette dipped in PCP, or one dipped in embalming fluid.
- A juvenile stated that a dipper “is embalming fluid cut with a bunch of things mixed together. Straight embalming fluid will kill you. Straight embalming fluid is really expensive . . . if it comes from DC, it’s cut already, but not if it’s from the boy who works at the funeral parlor.”
- Another OPUS youth reported that PCP was used “with paper (just roll up paper with nothing in it and dip it in), with parsley (it’s called ‘green’), or with weed.”

What Drug Scan Contacts in the County Are Saying

- OPUS juveniles' statements were consistent with Drug Scan reports that PCP was typically smoked on cigarettes called dippers, or on parsley, or on marijuana called "love boat." According to Drug Scan contacts, PCP was readily available, and users had "no trouble getting it."
- A Drug Scan contact in law enforcement reported that PCP was back "with a vengeance." Contacts cited evidence of PCP use via seizures, arrests, and information from confidential informants.
- Drug Scan contacts stated that the reason PCP was not reported at high levels in the schools was that most who used had dropped out.
- Quality control of PCP, according to one contact, was poor.

When we asked OPUS juveniles why kids use drugs, we received a variety of answers:

- "To look cool, get minds off stuff that happens at school or home. It's a vacation that lasts for a couple hours."
- "Their friends think it's cool—try to be like their friends."
- "They're bored and need a life . . . because other people do it."
- "Pressured to try it and then get addicted."
- "If parents do it (drugs), kids are gonna do it."

Key Terms

OPUS (Offender Population Urinalysis Screening)—Staff conduct interviews with juvenile offenders at county intake centers.

Drug Scan—Staff conduct interviews with professionals in education, criminal justice, prevention, and public health.

MAS (Maryland Adolescent Survey)—A bi-annual survey of drug use by 6th, 8th, 10th, and 12th graders.

Current use is the use of a drug at least once in the past 30 days.

Drug Mentions—The Substance Abuse Management Information System (SAMIS) is maintained by the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Administration to monitor treatment admissions. Up to three drugs of abuse are noted