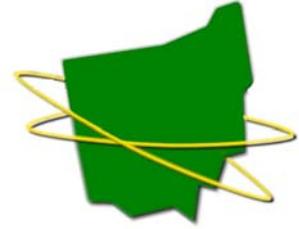




OSAM-O-GRAM

DATE: June 2004

DATELINE: Ohio



Wright State University
The University of Akron

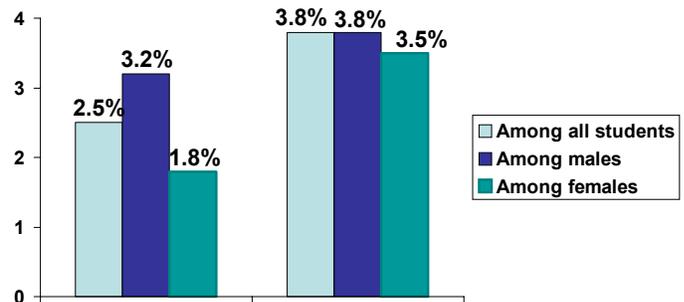
Rural Southeast Reports Increases in the Heroin Availability and Abuse for the First Time

In June 2004, our Regional Epidemiologist covering **rural southeast Ohio (Athens, Vinton, and Hocking Counties)** reported increases in heroin availability and abuse for the first time. These observations were based on focus groups with drug users and substance abuse treatment providers who reported seeing some increases in heroin abuse, especially among white young adults. Prior to June 2004, there was little mention about heroin abuse in the area. In the current reporting period, increasing heroin abuse was identified as one of the emerging problems that rural communities in that area will be facing.

Drug users reported that heroin in the rural southeast sells at higher prices than in the urban centers of the state. In the **Dayton and Columbus** areas heroin averages around \$150 per gram and \$20 per bag. Drug users from **Athens** and surrounding areas reported local prices of heroin as high as \$30-\$40 per bag. Nevertheless, heroin's availability in the rural southeast was described as much higher than in the recent past.

Since 2000, the OSAM Network has been reporting increases in heroin abuse in major metropolitan areas across the state. In 2002, increases in heroin-related overdose cases were also reported in neighboring **Marietta/Washington County**. White, suburban adolescents and young adults were consistently identified as the fastest growing groups of new users. OSAM Network reports are consistent with the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Youth Risk Behavior Survey which shows statewide increases in the lifetime prevalence of heroin use among high-school student in Ohio from 2.5% in 1999 to 3.8% in 2003. The increase among female students was even greater, from 1.8% in 1999 to 3.5% in 2003 (Figure 1). Increasing heroin availability and abuse in rural areas of the state is a new and troubling trend which requires close monitoring in the future.

Figure 1. Prevalence of Lifetime Heroin Use Among Ohio Students (9th-12th Graders) in 1999 and 2003



Note: Data derived from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Youth Risk Behavior Survey.

OSAM-O-GRAMS report key findings of the Ohio Substance Abuse Monitoring (OSAM) Network. Informants located throughout the state use qualitative and quantitative data to provide semiannual monitoring of substance abuse trends. The OSAM Network is funded by the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services by contract to Wright State University and by subcontract to the University of Akron. This OSAM-O-GRAM is based on the June 2004 OSAM Network meeting.

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