



OSAM-O-GRAM



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DATELINE: Ohio

Wright State University
The University of Akron

Targeted Response Initiative on Methamphetamine Abuse in Ohio Part IV: Types of Methamphetamine Abusers

The 83 individuals interviewed for this statewide initiative represented diverse patterns of methamphetamine (meth) abuse. Three distinct groups of meth abusers were identified.

The first group included white individuals of lower socioeconomic status from both urban and rural environments. Typically, these individuals used meth for both recreational and work-related reasons, and many were involved in meth manufacturing. Some initially felt that meth use was a way for them to increase their income—by working extra shifts, being more productive at work, or manufacturing and selling the drug. For example, a 42-year-old white man from Dayton who worked as a “pipe man” described his experiences:

You do a line [of meth], and then you was able to work 20 hours.... At that time... it was a miracle drug.... It [meth] got me through a lot of hard work, I made a lot of money, not just from selling it but, ya know, from my regular job. It was a 40-hour job, and plus we had a lot of overtime, and there was no way I could have did that [without meth].

The second group could be described as “party kids,” and included white individuals in their late teens and 20s, some of them college students. “Party kids” typically used meth, at least initially, as a part of the rave and/or club drug scene. Although in many aspects, there was some overlap between the first and second user groups, “party kids” grew up in families of higher socioeconomic background than the first group. Some accounts suggested that meth-involved “party kids” represented a distinct subculture within the rave scene. A 22-year-old white woman from Columbus characterized meth users as follows:

Generally middle-class, white suburban kids that are doing it [meth] because it's the thing to do that weekend.... Usually you can find it [meth] really easily at parties [raves].... There's like the ecstasy kids, and then there's like the meth kids at parties. The meth kids tend to be a lot more angry and jaded.... Like not everybody does it, but you [tend to] move on from one to the next.

The third group of meth abusers included gay men, and was represented by several participants interviewed in Columbus and Cleveland--although meth use among gay men is not limited to these cities. These individuals often used meth in the context of sexual relationships. A 38-year-old white man from Columbus commented, “It's a sex drug. Definitely, definitely increases your sex appetite. And you're less inhibited, you feel more confident, more sure of yourself.” This group related meth use to unsafe sexual behaviors and increased risk for blood-borne infections.

Diversity of the user population may indicate a developing threat of “multiple methamphetamine epidemics,” each with unique treatment and prevention needs.

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 a field report received June 2005.

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