



# OSAM-O-GRAM



DATE: June 2006  
DATELINE: Dayton, Ohio

Wright State University & the University of Akron

## Targeted Response Initiative on Young Heroin Users in Ohio Part V. Treatment Experiences

Most participants (78%) had been to a treatment program for heroin abuse/dependence at least once. Nearly 50% reported that they had been in treatment more than once. Typically, motivation to seek treatment was precipitated by a crisis related to negative personal and social consequences of heroin use. A 24-year-old white woman commented:

*I was homeless. I didn't have anything left. And I knew, sooner or later they were gonna catch me, 'cause I hadn't been to my probation officer in months. And I just woke up [one day]... like I seen the light... I was in a bush, hiding from my boyfriend and his friends, doing the dope that I hid, that they didn't know that I had. And I just looked at my life... and I knew I wanted to go [to treatment].*

Although participants typically reported positive experiences at substance abuse treatment programs, many had to overcome a number of obstacles when seeking treatment for heroin abuse. About 36% reported at least one failed attempt to access treatment services. Commonly reported treatment barriers were:

- **Availability of services.** About 50% of participants felt there were not enough treatment services available to heroin abusers, and many lacked information about existing treatment options. For example, a 29-year-old white woman indicated, "*Lotta people that I do know that's on heroin, they want help, you know. They just don't know where to go.*"
- **Waiting lists.** About 54% of participants reported being placed on a waiting list for treatment. Average wait time was about 1.5 months. The majority felt that they needed immediate help when seeking treatment, and thought that waiting lists could reduce their motivation to seek help. A 22-year-old white woman described her experiences: "*Crisis can't wait a month and a half, you know. By then you might not feel the same way, you might not feel as up for it [treatment], you know, as you did at that moment [of seeking treatment]. I want help right now, by then you think, I'm doin' good, I'm doin' better, I can do this on my own....*"
- **Lack of reliable transportation** was discussed as another serious obstacle, especially for those who had to attend outpatient services. Many users did not own vehicles and had to rely on public transportation or other people's help to attend treatment programs located far away from where they lived. A 20-year-old white man commented: "*I live in M, so it's about a 20-minute drive [to the methadone clinic]. And I didn't have a car, so I was borrowing mom's car, or taking the bus which was quite a walk....*"
- **Administrative and financial issues** related to accessing publicly funded services were perceived as serious obstacles by some users. For example, a 22-year-old woman complained about her failure to enter treatment: "*You gotta have ID's before they even try and help you... And then you gotta have money, I mean insurance....*"
- **Negative views and misinformation about methadone therapy** may present another obstacle for some users. For example, a 29-year-old woman indicated: "*I would love to get some type of treatment but from what I hear, the one thing that's available is methadone. And coming off methadone's worse than coming off of heroin.... And I've seen people get ten times worse on the methadone than they were on the heroin.... I don't know, I'm so afraid of the methadone....*"

OSAM Network interviews suggest that a significant number of heroin users fail in some of their attempts to access substance abuse treatment services. Some of the reported treatment barriers point to a need of more accurate and timely information about available services.

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 2006 OSAM Network meeting.

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