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RESEARCH FOCUS ON YOUTH

New York State Division for Youth Bureau of Program Evaluation And Research

SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG YOUTH ADMITTED TO DFY

Introduction

Illegal drugs account for an ever-increasing proportion of social problems in America. It should not be surprising, then, that substance abuse treatment is the most common special service need identified among youth admitted to the Division for Youth (DFY). Services are provided to youth with drug/alcohol abuse problems as well as to those adjudicated for selling drugs.

This *Research Focus on Youth* describes the characteristics of youth identified as needing education and/or treatment services, as well as DFY's response to these service needs. The term substance abuser is used generically in this report for analytical purposes and is not intended to attach a more general negative connotation to the character of youth admitted to DFY.

Profile of substance abusers

All 2,123 admissions to DFY from July 1, 1989 thru June 30, 1990 were screened at intake on an instrument used to identify youth with a need for substance abuse treatment services. More than 56% of these youth screened positive. This instrument identified youth as likely substance abusers if there was a documented pattern of substance abuse or the youth admitted to abusing drugs or alcohol. The purpose of the screen was to identify youth at intake who require placement in a facility with the capability to conduct a more in-depth chemical or alcohol abuse assessment and to provide the necessary service.

TABLE 1
SUBSTANCE ABUSE SCREEN RESULTS BY
DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF ADMISSIONS
July 1989 - June 1990

	Number (100%*)	SCREENED NEED		
		Negative	Positive	
			Drug Offender	Others
TOTAL	2123	44%	14%	42%
AGE				
9 - 14	865	53%	10%	37%
15 - 18	1258	38%	17%	45%
SEX				
Female	288	50%	5%	45%
Male	1835	43%	16%	42%
RACE/ETHNICITY				
White	444	39%	1%	60%
African-Am.	980	45%	20%	36%
Latino	345	39%	19%	42%
Other	44	48%	5%	48%
RESIDENCE				
N Y City	1212	46%	21%	33%
Metro Cnties	377	40%	9%	51%
Bal. of State	533	41%	3%	56%

* May not add to 100% due to rounding

Youth admitted to DFY on a Penal Law drug charge adjudication accounted for 25% (300) of those with a screened substance abuse treatment need. The remaining 75% (892) of youth who screened positive, though not adjudicated drug offenders, showed evidence of drug/alcohol use sufficient to disrupt functioning in daily life. This also resulted in a positive screened need for substance abuse treatment services.

Demographic characteristics

The results of the preliminary substance abuse screen are shown for several client demographic groups in Table 1. These data reveal several interesting variations among youth in their need for substance abuse education and/or treatment services upon admission to DFY.

Although substance abuse is a problem for

TABLE 2
SUBSTANCE ABUSE SCREEN RESULTS BY
LEGAL CHARACTERISTICS OF ADMISSIONS

	Number (100%*)	Screened Need		
		Negative	Positive	
			Drug Offender	Other Offender
TOTAL	2123	44%	14%	42%
PRIOR HISTORY				
No Drug Charges	1949	47%	11%	42%
Prior Drug Charges	174	5%	53%	42%
ADJUDICATION				
Juvenile Offender	98	53%	NA	47%
Restrictive JD	7	14%	NA	86%
J.D. Title 3	1414	42%	16%	42%
J.D. Title 2	395	47%	19%	33%
PINS	194	49%	NA	52%
Other/None	15	40%	7%	53%
LEVEL OF DFY ADMISSION				
Secure	120	51%	2%	48%
Non-Community	1608	41%	17%	43%
Community Based	173	71%	8%	21%

May not add to 100% due to rounding

youngsters of all ages at DFY, the Division's older youth (i.e., 15 and older) were disproportionately more likely than younger ones (under 15) to have demonstrated a need for substance abuse education and/or treatment services. For example, less than half (47%) of the younger group screened positive on the substance abuse diagnostic, while almost two-thirds (62%) of the older youth had positive findings on this screen. Further, while older youth represented only 59% of all admissions during the study period, they accounted for 71% of all those admitted to DFY for drug offenses. It is clear, however, that substance abuse prevention efforts are relevant for youngsters at a very early age, especially since such a large proportion of the Division's younger population demonstrated involvement with drugs and/or alcohol.

Males were slightly more likely than females to have demonstrated a substance abuse treatment need in the preliminary screening process. Fifty-seven percent of males, compared with 50% of females, screened positive. Overall, males accounted for 95% of admissions to DFY for drug offenses, but only 86% of admissions overall.

White and Latino youth were also slightly more likely than African-Americans to

demonstrate a screened need for substance abuse treatment services. Sixty-one percent of White and 61% of Latino youth, compared with 55% of African-American youth, screened positive. However, it appears that African-Americans and Latinos were more likely than others to screen positive as the result of adjudication on drug charges rather than use/abuse problems. In fact, African-American youth accounted for the large majority (73%) of admissions to DFY for drug offenses, although this group represented only 54% of all screened admissions. In contrast, White youth appeared much more likely than others to have screened positive for substance abuse treatment services due to reasons other than drug charges, for example, use/abuse of drugs and/or alcohol. Unfortunately, the present data cannot address whether these variations are due to factors such as the differential propensity of these groups to abuse illegal substances as opposed to differential law enforcement and/or judicial practices that may be experienced by these youth.

Finally, youth from New York City were slightly less likely than others to screen positive for substance abuse treatment services. Fifty-four percent of New York City youth screened positive compared with

60% of youth from Metropolitan Counties (Erie, Monroe, Onondaga, Nassau, Suffolk and Westchester and 59% of youth from the balance of the State. However, placements to DFY facilities from New York City are clearly involved with drugs, as they accounted for 83% of admissions for drug offenses, yet they represented only 57% of admissions overall. This intuitively leads to the question of whether youth from New York City are as candid about their substance abuse experiences during the diagnostic screening process as youth from other counties. Such questions, however, are beyond the scope of this analysis.

Legal characteristics

The substance abuse treatment needs of youth placed with DFY can be further understood by examining screen results in the context of the legal characteristics of these youth. Selected data are presented in Table 2.

Very few youth (8%) who were screened for substance abuse problems had an apparent history of prior drug charges (e.g., arrests, placements, etc.). However, it is very clear in these analyses that the majority (53%) of youth who did have a drug history demonstrated a present substance abuse treatment need as the result of a current adjudication on drug charges.

Upon first look at client adjudication status, it appears that the youth most likely to have screened negative for substance abuse treatment needs were Juvenile Offenders (53%) and Persons In Need of Supervision (49%). However, by definition/statute, neither JOs nor PINS can be adjudicated for a drug offense. Therefore, JOs and PINS who screened positive for this treatment need did so, not because of their present charge, but because of their past/present substance abuse behavior. JOs and PINS, therefore, appear to represent the Division's client groups most likely to have drug/alcohol abuse problems.

Since substance abuse is considered as a factor in DFY's classification system, it is not surprising that youth initially placed in community-based facilities were those least likely to require substance abuse treatment services. Seventy-one percent of youth placed in community-based facilities screened negative. This reflects a judgement that it is desirable to treat youth with substance abuse problems in a non-

community based setting whenever possible. In fact, 90% of adjudicated drug offenders were initially placed in non-community based residential facilities.

Other treatment needs

The substance abuse treatment needs of youth can also be considered in the context of their other special service needs while under DFY care.

Overall, approximately one-third (30%) of youth with a substance abuse treatment need also screened positive for a need for mental health services. It is especially interesting to note that only 16% of drug offenders needed these services compared with 35% of "other" substance abusers.

Analyses further reveal that 30% of youth with a substance abuse treatment need also screened positive at intake for special education services. Proportionately fewer drug offenders (23%) also needed these services compared with "other" substance abusers (32%).

Placement patterns

An examination of 1980-1989 data from New York State's Uniform Crime Reporting system (Figure 1) shows a substantial increase in recent years in arrests of juveniles for drug offenses. In fact, between 1986 (the decade's low point for juvenile drug arrests) and 1989, the State experienced a 68% increase in juvenile drug arrests, from 1,618

in 1986 to 2,712 in 1989. According to UCR statistics, adult arrests for drug offenses in New York State during the corresponding period rose only 42%, from 99,948 in 1986 to 142,375 in 1989.

Along with this dramatic rise in juvenile arrests for drug offenses has come a fundamental shift in the nature of drug charges lodged against juveniles. The shift in the arrest pattern has been from drug possession/use to drug sales. For example, in 1983 only 26% of juvenile drug arrests were for the sale of dangerous drugs, the balance of arrests being for drug possession/use offenses. In 1986, however, 41% of juvenile drug arrests were for the sale of drugs, while in 1989 the majority (59%) of these arrests were for drug sale offenses.

There has been a basic change in the nature of the drugs that have been involved in juvenile drug arrests. As shown in Figure 2, marijuana has taken a back seat to cocaine.

FIGURE 2
TYPE OF DRUG IN JUVENILE ARRESTS

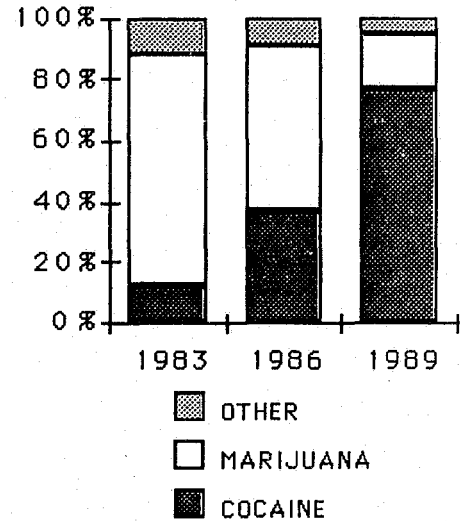


FIGURE 3
DFY ADMISSIONS OF DRUG OFFENDERS
1980-1989

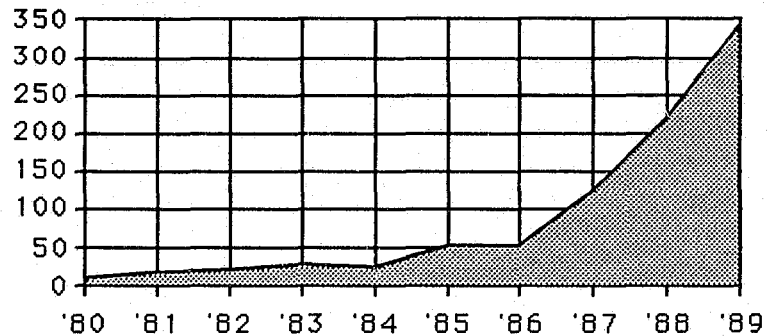
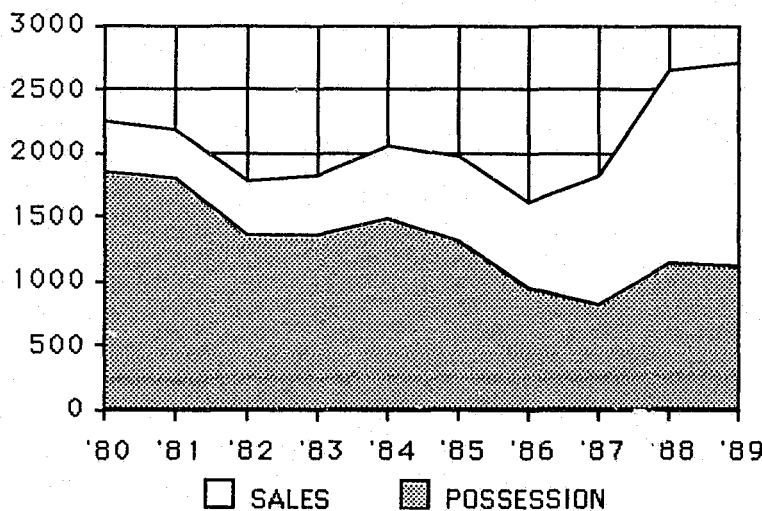


FIGURE 1
ARRESTS OF JUVENILES FOR DRUG SALE AND POSSESSION IN NEW YORK STATE
1980-1989



In 1983 77% of juvenile drug arrests were for the sale or possession of marijuana. In contrast, 1989 saw a complete reversal in this pattern with 77% of juvenile drug arrests resulting from the sale or possession of opium, cocaine or their derivatives.

These statewide trends in juvenile drug arrests have been dramatically reflected in recent admissions to the Division for Youth. As shown in Figure 3, the period from 1986 to 1989 saw a 535% increase in annual admissions on drug offenses, from 54 youth admitted in 1986 to 343 drug offenders admitted in 1989. Drug offenders have accounted for an increasing proportion of admissions to DFY as well. Specifically, such cases represented only 0.5% of admissions in 1980, yet they comprised 15% of admissions in 1989.

**TABLE 3
ADJUDICATION CHARGE FOR DRUG OFFENDERS
PLACED WITH DFY DURING 1989**

<u>CHARGE</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>%</u>
PL 220.03 Criminal Possession -7 (Class A Misdemeanor)	176	51
PL 220.06 Criminal Possession -5 (Class D Felony)	77	22
PL 220.16 Criminal Possession -3 (Class B Felony)	44	13
PL 220.39 Criminal Sale -3 (Class B Felony)	22	6
PL 220.09 Criminal Possession -4 (Class C Felony)	11	3
Other Drug Offenders (9 Felony, 4 Misdemeanor)	<u>13</u>	<u>4</u>
TOTAL	343	100% *

May not add to 100% due to rounding

Youth admitted to DFY on drug charges have typically been adjudicated on a drug possession offense (93% of drug admissions in 1989). This pattern held throughout the 1980s. An examination of Table 3 shows that the modal charge for drug offenders admitted to DFY during 1989 was Criminal Possession of a Controlled Substance - Seventh degree (PL220.03), representing 51% of drug admissions. Although the majority (52%) of 1989 drug admissions were for misdemeanor offenses, the proportion of cases that were felonies had risen from 28% in 1986 to 48% in 1989 suggesting the more serious nature of recent drug activity. Further, the true severity of these offenses may be masked by charge adjustments and plea bargaining that may take place as a case moves from the police to probation and, finally, through Family Court.

Service response

In order to address the problem of substance abuse among the youth entering the Division for Youth's residential facilities, the following actions have been taken:

- A substance abuse Resource Coordinator has been hired and is working to develop and implement alcohol and substance abuse programs in Division facilities.

- Specialized alcohol and substance abuse counseling programs are currently in place at the following facilities:

Allen Residential Center
Annsville Residential Center
Cass Residential Center
Goshen Secure Center
Highland Residential Center
Industry School
MacCormick Residential Center
Tryon Residential Center
Tryon Girls Center
(Secure and Limited Secure)

- Specialized units have been designated for drug dependent youth at Highland Residential Center and Tryon Residential Center.

- Staff in eleven facilities that will have Alcohol and Substance Abuse Programs are being trained by Narcotics and Drug Research Incorporated (NDRI).

- Self help programs are being provided at many facilities and will be active in all facilities upon completion of NDRI training.

- A grant has been requested from the Integrated Task Force to train Community Care (Aftercare) staff across the state and to provide more in-depth training to counseling staff in the eleven facilities that are receiving the initial training.

- Federal monies from Drug Free Schools funding have been utilized to purchase "Innervisions," an innovative substance

abuse curriculum for juvenile delinquents. Services for a consultant were also obtained to train 60 Division teachers and health services staff to implement the curriculum. Training was completed in October 1989.

- A Juvenile Justice Alcoholism Specialist has been hired through a joint grant with the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) and the Division of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse (DAAA). The Specialist is working out of the Division's Community Care Office in Albany. DAAA is considering replicating the Specialist position in three other Community Care Offices in the state.

- The Division, in cooperation with local governments, funds a variety of programs in the community for youth with substance abuse problems.

- The Division is making an intense effort to educate youth and staff in the dangerous relationship between drugs and AIDS and the behaviors that put their health at risk.

For more information on these program activities, contact the New York State Division for Youth, Office of Program Development and Evaluation, 52 Washington St., Rensselaer, N.Y. 12144.



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