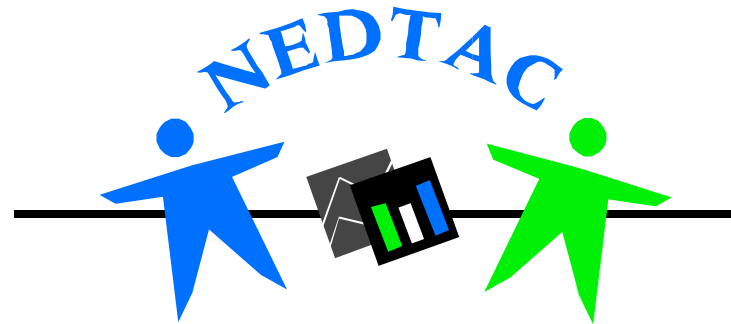


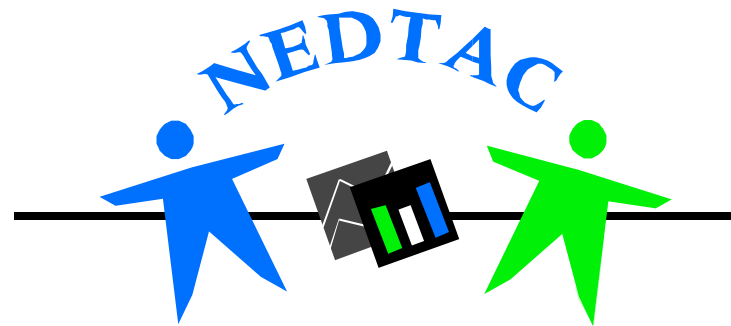
**NATIONAL EVALUATION DATA AND  
TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER**



**OVERVIEW OF CSAT HOTLINE SERVICES:  
USE OF THE DRUG TREATMENT AND REFERRAL HOTLINE  
(DECEMBER 1991 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 1993)**

**February 1996**

# NATIONAL EVALUATION DATA AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE CENTER



## OVERVIEW OF CSAT HOTLINE SERVICES: USE OF THE DRUG TREATMENT AND REFERRAL HOTLINE (DECEMBER 1991 THROUGH SEPTEMBER 1993)

February 1996

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**CSAT**  
Center for Substance  
Abuse Treatment  
SAMHSA

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## *Foreword*

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Providing access to information about substance abuse treatment services is an important component of the overall effort to help reduce substance abuse. The Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) Drug Treatment and Referral Hotline was a source of information for the general public. The primary objective of the hotline was to provide callers seeking information that was general and/or specific in nature about drugs, and callers seeking help for themselves or others, with referrals to treatment services and other treatment-related resources. During the call, data were collected which included how the caller learned about the hotline, why the caller was seeking information/help, the drugs of primary concern, and ability to pay for treatment.

CSAT's Program Evaluation Branch requested that the National Evaluation Data and Technical Assistance (NEDTAC) team analyze the data collected by the hotline. Data were available for calls received between December 1991 and September 1993. Over the 22 months of data collection, the hotline received 157,000 completed calls. Among the findings were that over 80 percent of the calls were about drug problems, with crack most often cited as the drug of primary concern. In addition, most drug users reported that they could not pay for treatment.

We wish to thank Henrick Harwood, Thomas Mannle, Purvi Sevak, and Sylvia Yu of The Lewin Group for performing the analysis and producing the report. In addition, we wish to thank Cygnus Corporation for providing the CSAT Drug Treatment and Referral Hotline data. We also wish to thank Charlene S. Lewis, Ph.D., Branch Chief, Program Evaluation Branch, and Ron Smith, Ph.D., the NEDTAC Government Project Officer, who provided guidance and direction for this effort. Georgia Laxton of Caliber Associates developed the detailed documentation and codebook for the datatape and provided significant assistance in accessing and using the datatape.

Sharon Bishop  
Project Director  
National Evaluation Data and  
Technical Assistance Center (NEDTAC)

## *Executive Summary*

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- ◆ The CSAT Hotline received about 10,000 calls per month--330 per day.
- ◆ Over the reporting period there were 220,000 calls-- 157,000 calls were "completed" (235 per day), and 63,000 were "not completed" (95 per day, mostly "crank calls", but a few wrong numbers).
- ◆ In almost 50,000 calls the caller sought help for her or himself, and over 20,000 sought help for a family member or friend--an average of over 100 calls per day seeking help with treatment referrals.
- ◆ Over 80 percent of calls were about drug problems; about 20 percent concerned alcohol, and less than 3 percent concerned AIDS or suicide.
- ◆ Crack was the primary concern for 44 percent of callers seeking help; other forms of cocaine was cited by 11 percent. All cocaine users reported daily use, and 80 percent had used 4 years or more.
- ◆ Injection drug use was cited for 14 percent of those seeking help. One third of this group was reported to have shared needles, and one third of these had shared in the past month.
- ◆ Residential treatment referrals were given to two thirds of callers seeking help; 45 percent were referred to self-help groups. Callers were referred to at least two modalities/sources of help.
- ◆ Most users could not pay for treatment--63 percent of males and 48 percent of females. Medicaid/ Medicare was the major payment source. About 15 percent had private insurance or the ability to pay from noninsurance sources. 26 percent of users reportedly had full-time jobs.
- ◆ In addition to "general information" and/or treatment referrals, callers were most often given phone numbers for their state substance abuse office, for self-help or support groups and for the National Clearinghouse on Alcohol and Drug Information.
- ◆ The phone book was how 40 percent of callers heard about the Hotline; 30 percent were referred by other hotlines; TV generated 12 percent; other media generated less than 3 percent each.

## *About the Drug Information and Referral Hotline*

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- ◆ The Hotline was a series of toll free numbers answered by operators who were trained and dedicated information specialists.
- ◆ Their primary objective was to provide callers assistance rather than collect data. The information obtained during the course of the call was entered into a data system called the Drug Information and Referral System, which processed the critical information in order to access and extract information during the call about appropriate treatment services and other resources located conveniently to the callers.
- ◆ Information was obtained during the course of conversations. Callers were not given verbatim questions, contributing to variability \*in the quality of the data from this system.
- ◆ The data system is missing a significant amount of information about calls and callers. Operators were directed to record "unknown" unless they obtained information Yielding a conclusive response.
- ◆ Some of the tables and figures sum to greater than 100 percent. Generally this is because for a number of questions interviewers were directed to record "all answers that apply". For example, a respondents could have \*indicated that they had problems with both drugs and alcohol, or cocaine and marijuana.
- ◆ Furthermore, ability to analyze this data was hampered due to limited documentation of the data base. The data base was not designed and developed to "public use" standards, as it was primarily intended for automatic generation of periodic reports on Hotline activity, rather than for analytic purposes. There were multiple versions of the data and documentation that have been reconciled for this work.

## *Glossary*

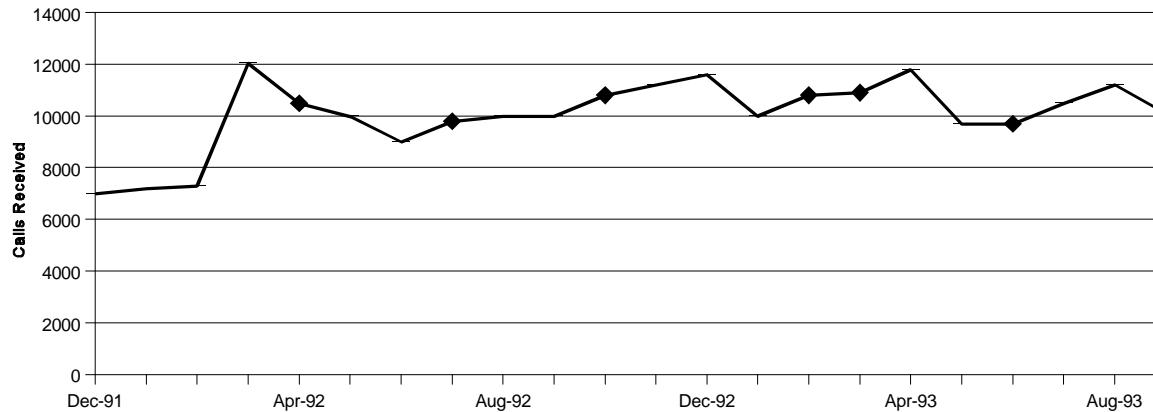
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- ◆ Calls: the number of telephone calls answered by the Hotline.
- ◆ Completed Calls: the number of calls in which a caller seeking general information or help was provided with information pertinent to the purpose of the call.
- ◆ Not Completed Calls: calls answered by the Hotline where the caller sought no information or assistance--about 80 percent of these were "crank calls", with a few wrong numbers and "hang UPS
- ◆ Callers: the number of individuals that placed calls, whether they sought information, or help for themselves or another due to a drug problem.
- ◆ Seeking Help: when a caller is seeking to obtain a referral to a treatment provider or support group because they or another person has a problem with drugs.
- ◆ Users: either a caller that acknowledged having a drug problem during the call, or a person not the caller about whom, or on whose behalf the call was made to the Hotline \*in order to seek help.

## *The Hotline received 10, 000 calls per month--about 330 per day*

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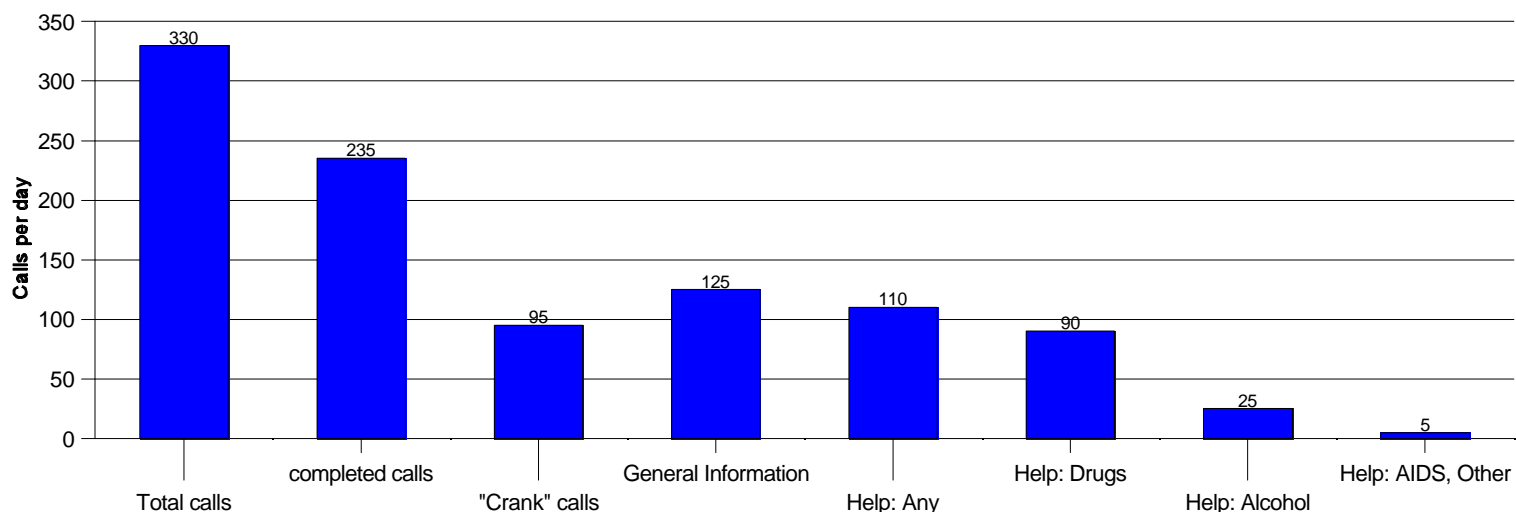
Calls Received Between December 1991 - September 1993



- ◆ The Hotline received 220,000 calls over the 22 months that calls were tracked (the period of time for which NEDTAC was provided data to analyze).
- ◆ Generally there was no trend in the number of calls over the period studied--although the first three months were materially lower than the rest of the period. No other trend analyses were performed.
- ◆ A total of 157,000 calls were "completed", and about 63,000 (29 percent) of the calls were not completed. Most of the calls not completed--52,000--were crank calls. Another 8,3 00 were wrong numbers and 2,400 were "hang-ups".

*Completed hotline calls were roughly divided between call for help, and requests for general information*

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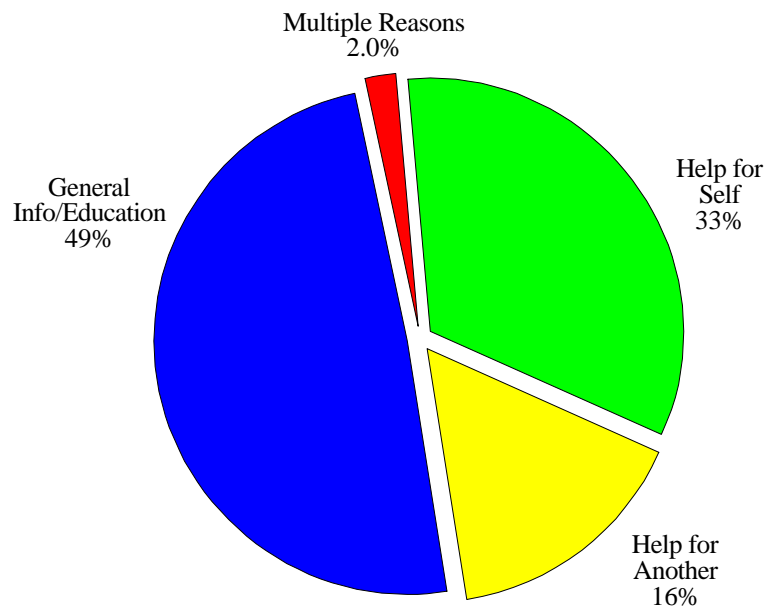


- ◆ The 330 calls to the Hotline per day were roughly divided between calls for help (110 calls), for general information (125 calls) and "crank calls, hangups and wrong numbers (95 calls).
- ◆ Completed calls constituted 70 percent of calls logged (235 per day), including those seeking help and those in search of general information on substance abuse.
- ◆ The Hotline also processed calls which were "not completed". Most of these were "crank calls", while fewer were wrong numbers or hangups.
- ◆ A drug problem was the predominant reason callers sought help (83 percent), while 23 percent reported an alcohol problem, and less than 5 percent were seeking help related to AIDS or suicide (callers could report more than one problem for which help was sought).
- ◆ About 10 calls per day sought help with more than one problem.

***Almost 50,000 persons (over 75 per day) called seeking help for themselves;  
over 20,000 callers (over 30 per day) sought help for a family member or friend***

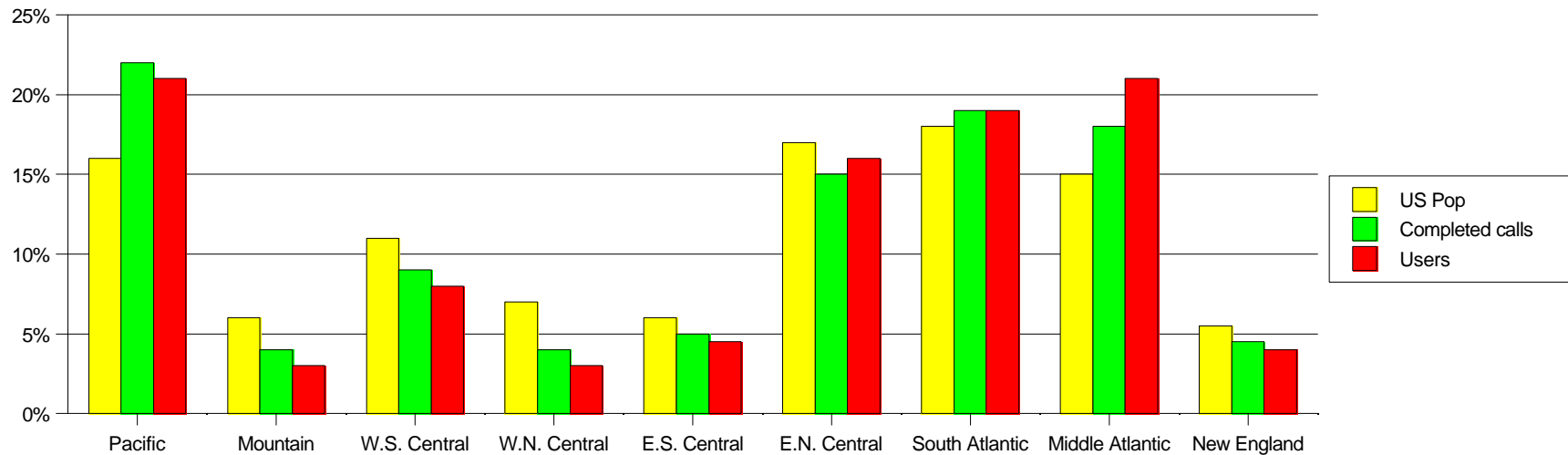
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Calls to Hotline by Reason for Call



- ◆ About 49 percent of completed calls (which will generally be referred to in the rest of this brief as “calls”) were specifically seeking help for the caller, or for another such as a family member or a friend.
- ◆ The remaining 51 percent of calls were seeking more general information. It is possible that some of these calls also involved a user, but this could not be determined from the information provided by the caller.

*The heaviest per capita use of the Hotline was from the Pacific and Mid Atlantic regions.*

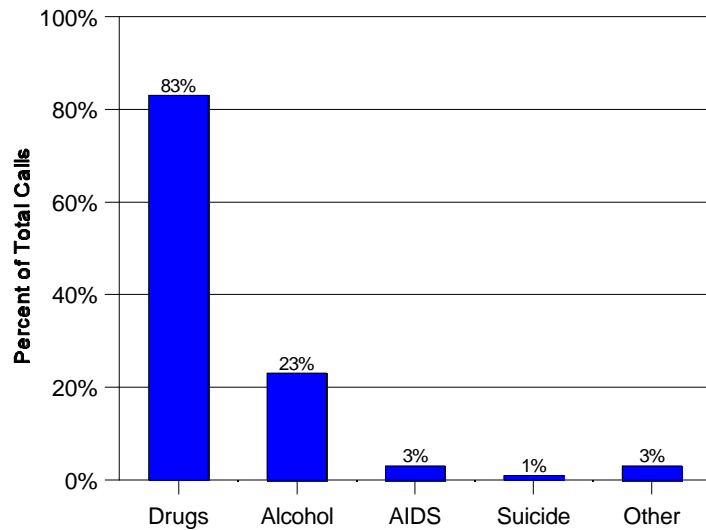


- ◆ Nationally, use of the Hotline was almost 1 call per 2400 persons age 12 and above per year (157,000 calls over 22 months from a population of 204 million). In the Pacific use was 1 call per 1730 persons.
- ◆ The Pacific census region had the heaviest per capita use of the Hotline (about 30 to 40 percent above the national average). The region generated 22 percent of completed calls representing 21 percent of users, compared to 16 percent of U.S. population (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1993). The Mid Atlantic had use about 20 to 30 percent above the national average, with 18 percent of calls, and 21 percent of users (calls from the MA were more likely to be seeking help than general information) versus 15 percent of U.S. population.
- ◆ Two census regions had Hotline utilization about 40 to 50 percent below the national average--the West North Central region (MN, the Dakotas, to MO and KS) had 4 percent of calls, 3 percent of users, and 7 percent of U.S. population; the region with the next lowest per capita use was the Mountain region (MT and ID to AZ and NM) followed by the West South Central region (TX, OK, ARK and LA).

## *Most of the calls to the Hotline were about drug problems*

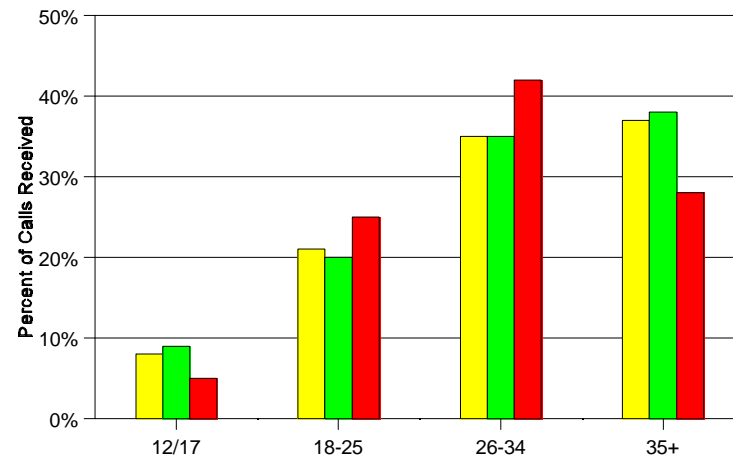
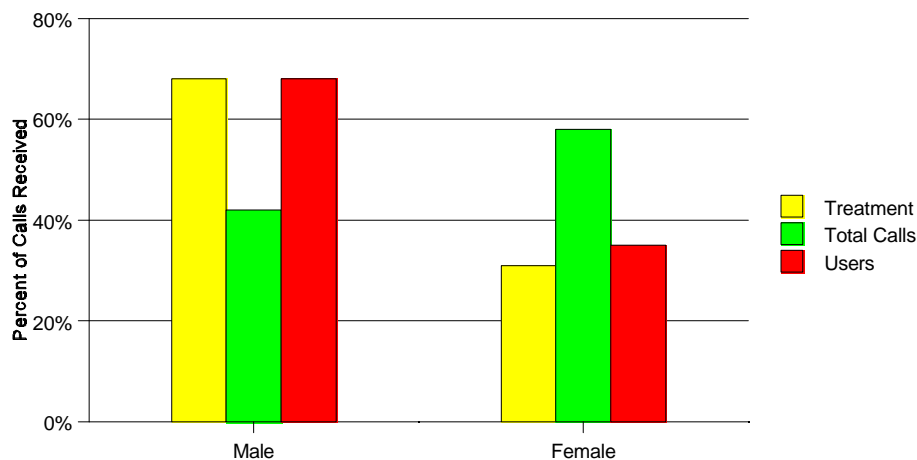
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Calls to Hotline  
December 1991-September 1993



- ◆ Drugs problems were cited as a topic of concern by 83 percent of callers (callers could identify more than one topic of concern).
- ◆ Alcohol problems were of concern for 23 percent of calls.
- ◆ A very small proportion of calls concerned AIDS or suicide.

*Females are more likely to call the Hotline than males, although the users for whom help was sought were much more likely to be male than female*

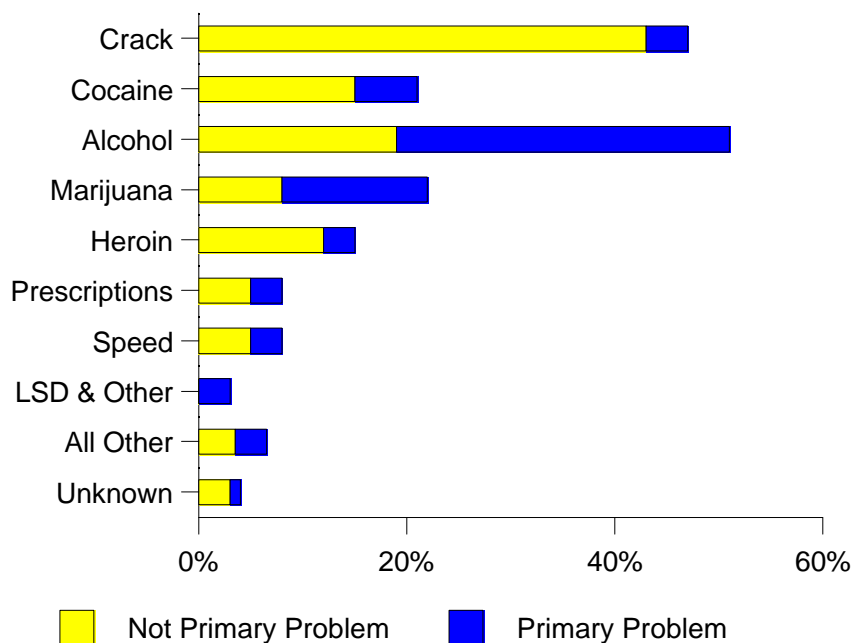


- ◆ Females made 56 percent of all calls to the Hotline, compared to 44 percent by males.
- ◆ In contrast, males constituted 66 percent of users (an 'individual who called on their own behalf or one about whom a call was made), versus 34 percent females.
- ◆ Recent studies of substance abuse treatment (e.g. the National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Unit Survey or NDATUS, from SAMHSA, 1994) have found that about two thirds of clients are male. This similarity in gender distributions between treatment populations and "users" lends some credibility to the suggestion that Hotline callers seeking help may be "representative" of those who enroll in publicly-supported treatment programs.
- ◆ The age distribution of both callers and of users was very similar to that of drug abusers enrolled in treatment (SAMHSA, 1994), although the average age of callers was modestly greater than that of users for whom help was sought.

## *Cocaine was the major problem drug cited for users/those seeking help*

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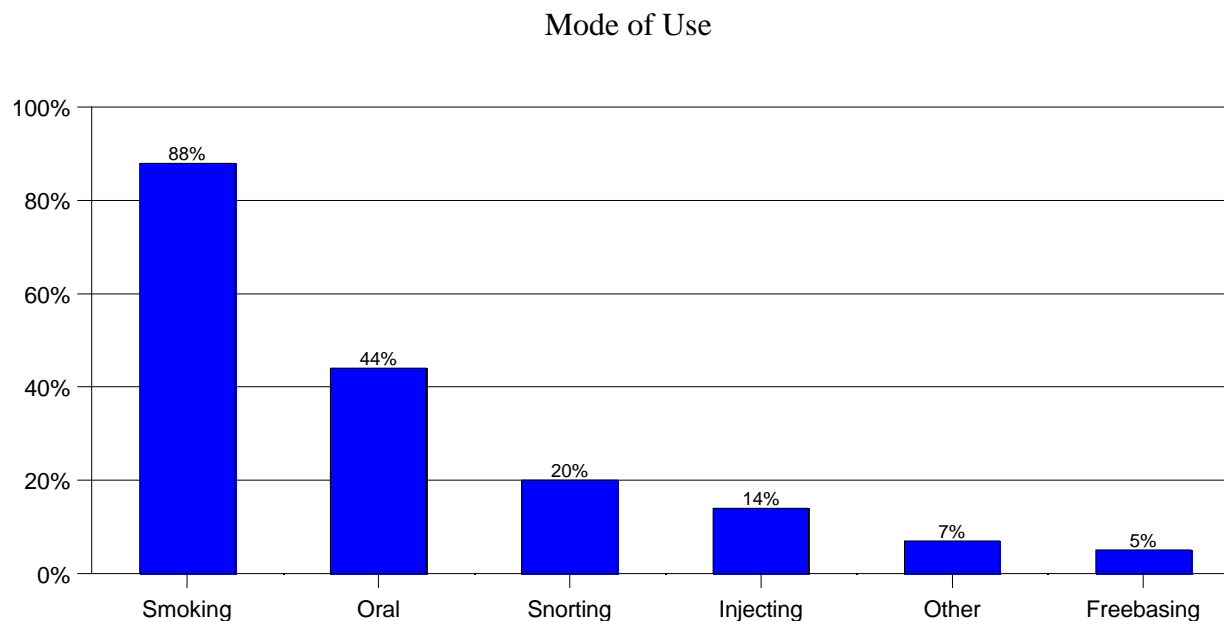
Patterns of Drug Use



- ◆ Crack or other forms of cocaine were the primary drug for 55 percent of users. About 60 percent of users had either a primary or secondary cocaine problem.
- ◆ Alcohol was a problem for 49 percent of users, although only 19 percent considered it their primary problem.
- ◆ Heroin was a problem for 10 percent of users, and most of these (8 percent) considered it their primary problem.

## *Smoking was the primary mode of use for cocaine for users/those seeking help*

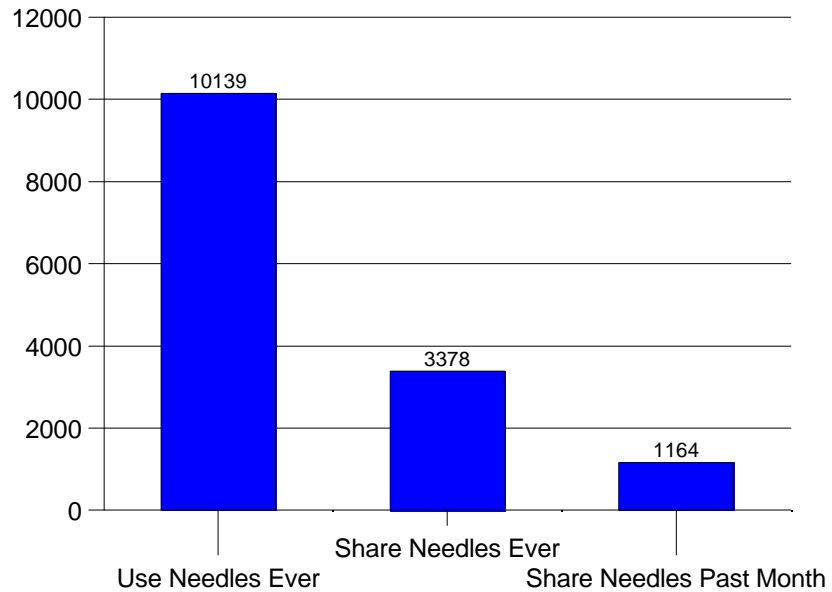
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- ◆ Out of the estimated 43,500 crack/other cocaine users (those seeking or for whom help was sought), 88 percent reported that they had smoked cocaine. This \*includes the crack users, plus a large part of the other cocaine users.
- ◆ Injection of cocaine was reported by 14 percent of cocaine users.
- ◆ Among crack/cocaine users for whom Hotline calls were received, use was daily and long term.
- ◆ Daily use was reported for all (100 percent) of cocaine users, however, it was not medicated how long daily use may have lasted.
- ◆ 81 percent of cocaine users reported cocaine use in excess of four years.

## *Injection drug use was reported for 14 percent of users*

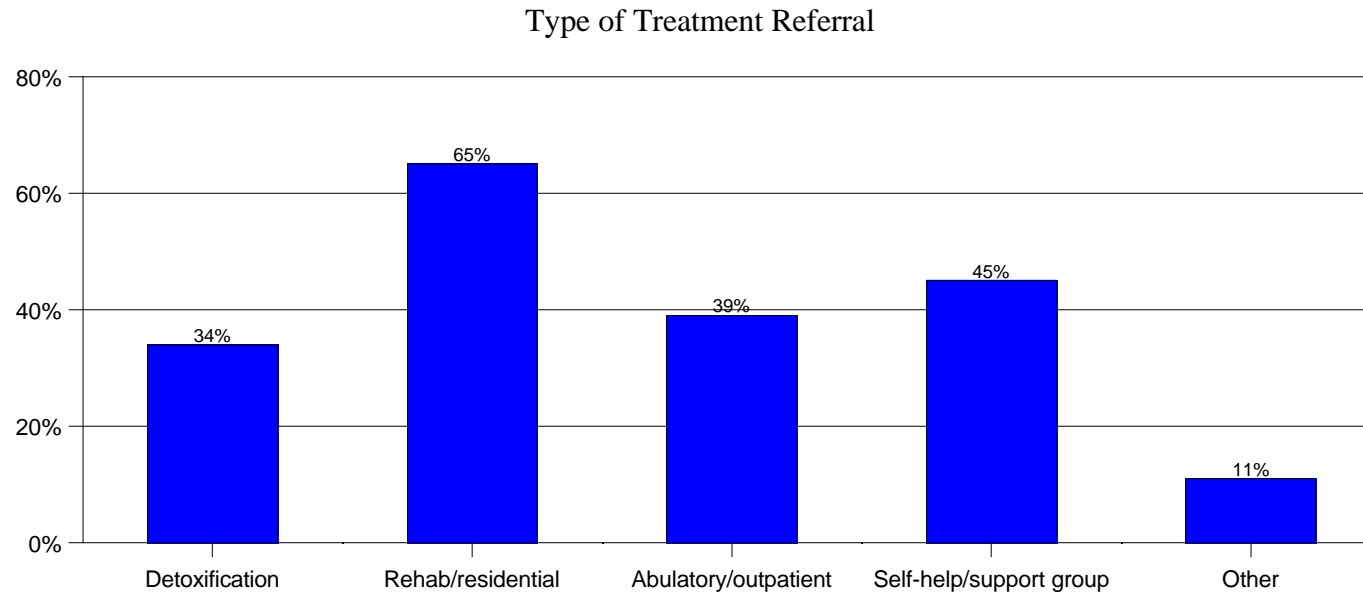
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- ◆ Over 10,000 calls for help involved injection drug users (1 of 7 "help" calls).
- ◆ One third of injection drug users were reported to have shared needles.
- ◆ Of those sharing needles, one third reported sharing within the past month.

***Residential treatment referrals were given to about two thirds of users***

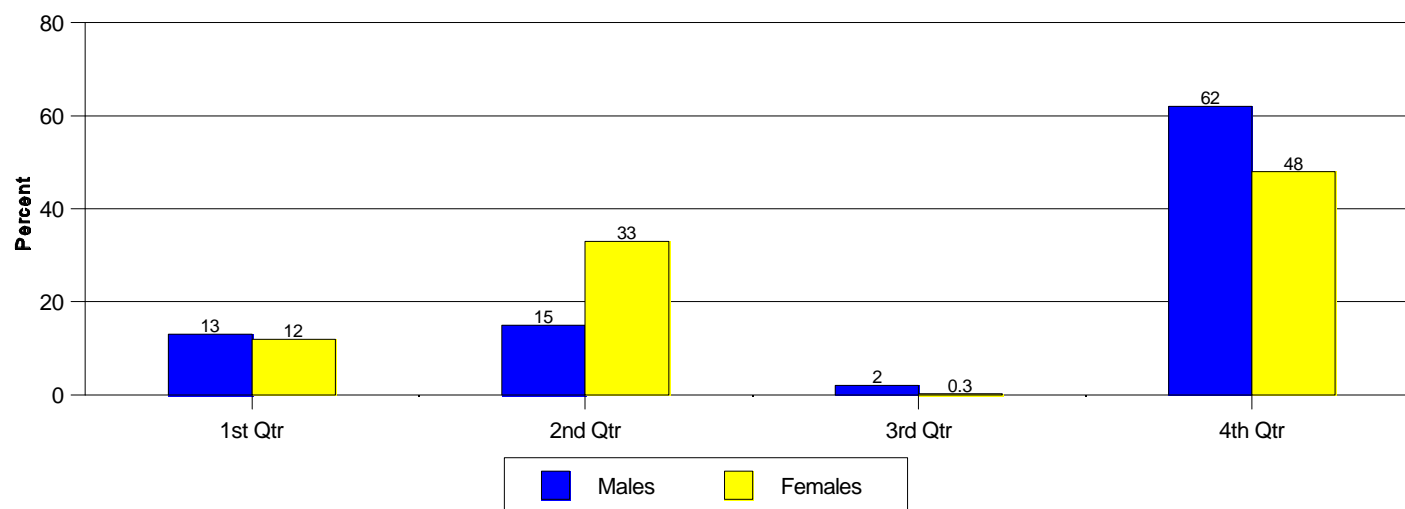
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- ◆ Users appear to have been given the names of at least 2 different types of help--including self-help groups. The data tape only indicates whether a caller was given the name of at least one provider of a particular modality of treatment or type of assistance (self help).
- ◆ The most frequently recommended type of care was 24 hour rehab treatment (65 percent of users). Self-help/support groups were recommended for 45 percent of users.
- ◆ The data tape includes no information that would indicate why particular calls were given references for specific types of care.

## *The ability to pay for treatment is very low*

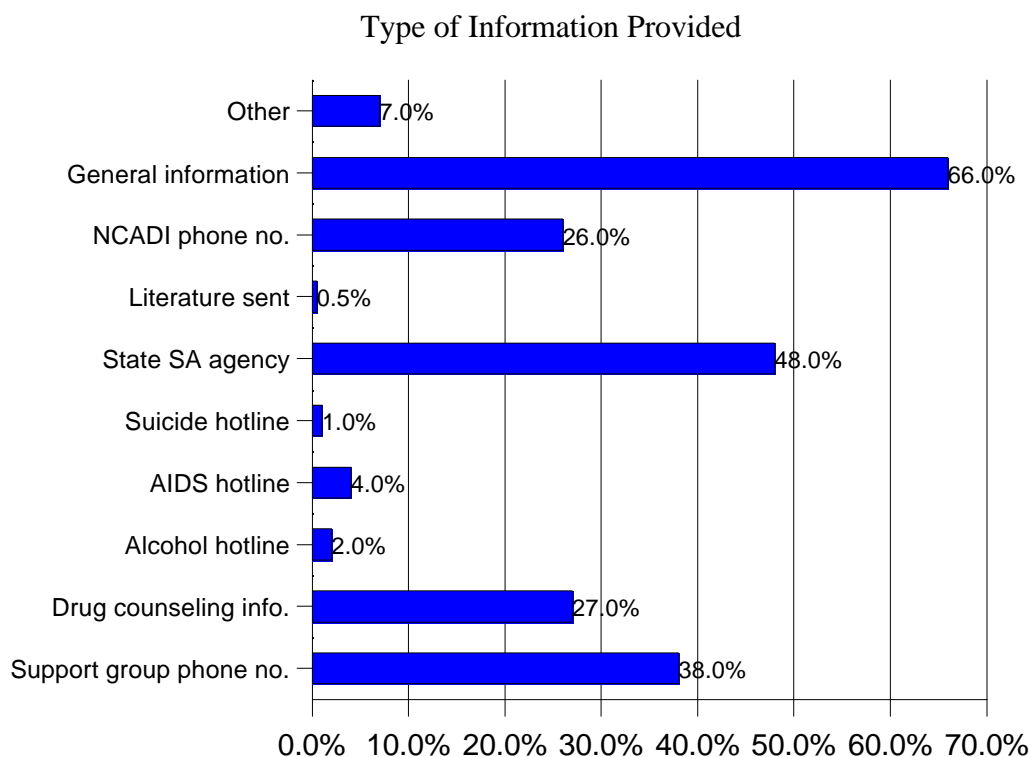
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- ◆ Over half of calls (57 percent) it was indicated that the user in need of help had no ability to pay for treatment. About 21 percent had Government Insurance (defined as either Medicaid or Medicare), and 13 percent had private insurance. Less than 5 percent each reported they could pay from their own or their family's money, or that they were eligible for Veteran's benefits.
- ◆ 48 percent of females versus 62 percent of males could not pay for treatment.
- ◆ Females were more likely than males to have Medicaid or Medicare coverage (33 versus 15 percent), and about equally likely to have private insurance.
- ◆ It was reported that 26 percent had full-time jobs, and virtually all of the rest worked part-time. Only 1 percent were reported to be currently unemployed.
- ◆ However, while the proportion with current full-time jobs is plausible (although materially below national averages), the proportion with part-time jobs may be problematic--in the general population with this demographic profile it would be usual to find 5 to 10 percent unemployed and up to 20 percent without jobs and in school, keeping house or disabled (U.S. Dept. of Commerce, 1993). It seems likely that the "part-time" response was miscoded by interviewers--perhaps indicating any level of job-seeking or employment over the recent past.

*The Hotline provided callers with a wide variety of kinds of information during the call*

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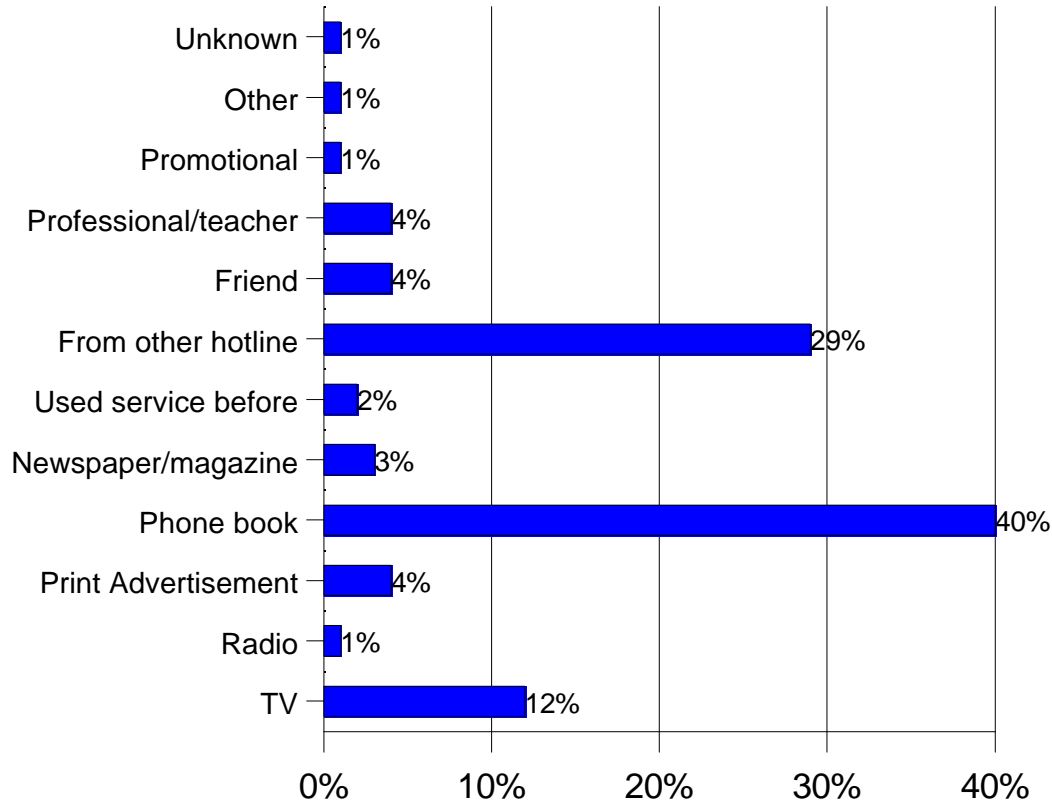


- ◆ Callers were most often given “general information”. There is no indication as to what this might constitute.
- ◆ The most frequent specific types of information given were referral to the state substance abuse office (48 percent of all calls), a local support group such as AA, CA, NA or Alanon or Alateen (38 percent), and the National Clearinghouse on Alcohol and Drug Information (NCADI) phone number (26 percent).
- ◆ It is also reported that 26 percent of calls were counseled or referred for help with drugs during the contact. It is unclear how these respondents overlap with the users that received referrals to specific providers.

## *The phone book and other hotlines were how most callers heard about the Hotline*

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Percent of Calls By Information Source



- ◆ More callers found out about the hotline by looking in the phone book (40 percent) than from any other source.
- ◆ It would appear that the Hotline was an important resource for other hotlines, as 29 percent of calls were referred from other hotlines.
- ◆ While TV ads generated 12 percent of calls, newspapers/magazines and print advertisements only generated 3 percent each, and radio 1 percent.

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## *Acknowledgments*

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