CSAT Center for Substance Abuse Treatment SAMHSA

# Identifying Substance Abuse Treatment and Criminal Justice Data Sources for Multiple Indicator Analysis

NEDS Fact Sheet 108

*Multiple Indicator Analysis (MIA) is a method developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) to assist planners and administrators in assessing the nature and extent of substance abuse in selected geographic areas. Analyses from secondary data, including substance abuse administrative treatment data, arrest and criminal justice data, mortality and morbidity data, poison control data, survey data, and census data, allow organizations to improve their capacity to implement planning activities, especially for high-risk populations. This fact sheet describes substance abuse treatment and arrest and criminal justice data sets, provides Web sites for accessing these data, if applicable, and presents some of the limitations of the data sources. Copies of the MIA can be obtained through the National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information at 1-800-729-6686 (NCADI publication number BKD418).*

## Background

Multiple Indicator Analysis (MIA) is a method that can be used by planners and administrators to assess the nature and extent of substance abuse in selected geographic areas by using existing multiple data sources. MIA was developed by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) Center for Substance Abuse Treatment (CSAT) to address substance abuse-related questions and issues critical to planners, policymakers, and service providers at the state, county, city, and community levels.

The MIA methodology provides a vehicle for substance abuse treatment analysts to accomplish a key goal, namely the ability to synthesize data from multiple data-sets (i.e., "families" of studies), and thereby answer questions that cannot be addressed by single evaluation data sources.

No single data source contains comprehensive information on populations abusing substances. Through the use of descriptive statistics, the MIA approach can be especially useful for assessing underreported illicit drug abuse, particularly cocaine powder, crack cocaine, heroin, and methamphetamine, as well as prescription drug abuse. By accessing and using multiple data sources, it is possible to obtain a better estimate of drug abuse prevalence, incidence, patterns, and trends. Some of the most useful data information sources for assessing the nature and extent of substance abuse include:

- Substance abuse treatment administrative data
- Arrest and criminal justice data
- Mortality data
- Morbidity data
- Poison control center data
- Survey data
- Census data.

This fact sheet focuses on two types of data sources for examining illicit drug use: substance abuse treatment and arrest and criminal justice data. Subsequent fact sheets will describe other types of data sets, including health data (i.e., mortality and morbidity), poison control center data, survey data, and census data.

## Substance Abuse Treatment Data

Most states report substance abuse treatment data to SAMHSA's Office of Applied Studies (OAS) as part of the Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS). County and city agencies can obtain the data from appropriate state offices. Often state data sets are more complete than TEDS data. Client treatment administrative data are typically collected by intake workers who are generally required to use a standardized questionnaire. Information elicited from the clients includes:

- Demographic characteristics
- Primary, secondary, and tertiary drugs of abuse
- Route of administration
- Frequency of use
- Referral source
- Prior treatment episodes.

To supplement information on clients, the state agency responsible for licensing substance abuse treatment programs should be able to provide the current licensed capacity for each program and the type of services provided by these programs. While these data provide information on the demand for services, it should be interpreted with caution because a treatment program may not be operating at capacity for reasons other than low demand (e.g., program might be new and not yet known to many residents).

Another substance abuse administrative treatment data source, the National Survey, Substance Abuse Treatment Services (N-SSATS) provides an annual one-day snapshot of clients receiving treatment and the number receiving substance abuse treatment in the past 12 months. Previously known as the Uniform Facility Data Set (UFDS), N-SSATS has downloadable data in ASCII and SAS formats available at http://www.samhsa.gov. N-SSATS is voluntary and therefore may underrepresent some populations. Single State Agencies (SSAs) should be able to provide a list of programs that do and do not report to N-SSATS. For programs, for example, in a targeted county that do not report to N-SSATS, the data may be accessed from records or directly from staff in nonparticipating programs.

Programs that receive Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment (SAPT) Block Grant funds are required to maintain waiting lists of persons who are injection drug users waiting to enter treatment. Waiting list data can provide some indication of the demand for particular services by injection drug users. Users of these data should be aware that waiting list numbers from different facilities may be duplicative given that a person may be on the waiting list of two or more facilities at the same time. Many individuals will not return to a facility after being put on a

waiting list, so these data are not an exact measure of treatment demand.

## Arrest and Criminal Justice Data

Local law enforcement agencies may provide specific information on drug-related arrests and drugs confiscated. Arrest and criminal justice data sources include:

- State police records
- Uniform Crime Reports submitted to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI)
- Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) program
- United States Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA).

One limitation of these data sources is the inconsistent way in which data are collected and reported by local jurisdictions. A description of data from these sources and where the data can be accessed follows.

In general, there is a narcotics division within the state police department responsible for collecting and reporting drug trends, including sources of drugs, trafficking patterns, and drug prices. Typically, separate groups handle different types of information. One group, for example, may handle information on arrests while another group may operate the forensic laboratory. Some states prepare periodic reports on the data collected from various sources. Occasionally, undercover purchases are made and tested as part of an ongoing investigation. The results from these tests can be useful for assessing trends in drugs used, seized, and drug purity.

Most states report drug-related arrest data to the FBI in a standardized format. The Uniform Crime Reports include data by every county on arrests for drug offenses (e.g., drug trafficking, drug possession). Arrests are reported by gender, race/ethnicity, and age of each person arrested. The Uniform Crime Reports use four drug categories:

- Opium and cocaine, and their derivatives
- Marijuana
- Other dangerous non-narcotic drugs such as barbiturates and benzedrine
- Synthetic narcotics such as demerol and methadone.

Annual Uniform Crime Reports can be obtained from the state police office/division responsible for preparing them.

The National Institute of Justice's Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) program surveys persons arrested in 35 metropolitan areas. Questionnaires are administered and bioassays are collected for a sample of arrestees. The arrestees are tested for ten illicit drugs, including cocaine, opiates, marijuana, phencyclidine (PCP), methadone, benzodiazepines, methaqualone, prop-osyphene, barbiturates, and amphetamines. Results from the surveys are published quarterly at http://www.adam-nij.net.

A source of arrest and criminal justice data on heroin is the DEA's Domestic Monitoring Program (DMP). The DMP reports sources, types, cost and purity of retail-level heroin. DEA undercover purchases allow for the price and purity in selected regions to be tracked over time. By comparing DMP reports over time, it is possible to assess the price per milligram and sources of heroin purchased in an area. Information on the DMP and "Illegal Drug Prices/Purity Reports" can be obtained from local DEA field offices or from the Intelligence Production Unit, Intelligence Division, DEA Headquarters. The DEA's Web site is http://www.usdoj.gov/dea.

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**We welcome feedback, comments, and suggestions. For more information, please contact us at (703) 385-3200, or visit the NEDS Web site at http://neds.calib.com. The NEDS Web site may also be accessed through the SAMHSA Web site at http://www.samhsa.gov/CSAT (Click on Data Resources).**

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