

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 treatment administrative 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 survey and census data sources and provides Web sites for accessing some of these data sources. These data sources are important for increasing awareness of emerging trends in substance use and provide a context for a broader understanding of the extent of substance abuse. 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 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 describes survey and census data sources for conducting an MIA. Fact Sheet 107 provides an overview of the

MIA method, the usefulness of the method for different audiences, and the strengths and limitations of the method. Fact Sheet 108 describes sources of substance abuse treatment and criminal justice data, while Fact Sheet 109 describes mortality, morbidity and poison control data and sources.

Survey Data

Survey data are available in many forms and may include the following:

- Household surveys
- Criminal justice surveys
- School surveys
- Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS).

The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NHSDA) is a good source of information on the prevalence of alcohol, marijuana, and nonmedical prescription drug use and on the characteristics of users of these substances. The survey, however, does not sample many persons who are considered “heavy drug abusers;” therefore, it yields low estimates of the prevalence of some types of illicit drug use. The 1999 NHSDA provides national and state-level estimates of substance use.

Criminal justice system surveys sample populations that may not be well-represented in household surveys, particularly those using illicit drugs. Many criminal justice surveys have been done under the CSAT State Treatment Needs Assessment Program. Surveys of persons in the criminal justice system can be used to help understand patterns of drug use, the relationship between drugs and criminal activity, and environmental factors that influence drug use.

School surveys can reveal emerging trends of underreported illicit drug abuse. Some state education agencies, Single State Agencies, and local school districts have been administering school surveys for years. The Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey, funded by research grants through the National Institute on Drug Abuse, is conducted by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research (ISR). Data analysts can compare their local findings with national data from the MTF, which are collected annually from a representative sample of 8th, 10th, and 12th graders.

The Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) is a national survey of priority health risk behaviors among youth and young adults. The YRBS is administered by the Centers for Disease Control and is conducted every two years. The 1999 national survey results are available for 41 state surveys, 4 territorial surveys, and 17 local surveys. The YRBS includes questions on tobacco, alcohol, and other drug use. Although the YRBS is a useful data source, one limitation is that samples may be small and may not represent youth and young adults from large, urban school districts.

The Use of Survey and Census Data for Estimating Substance Abuse

Census Data

Census statistics can be obtained for various types of geographic areas, such as regions, states, metropolitan statistical areas (MSAs), urbanized areas, congressional districts, Zip Codes, American Indian and Alaskan Native areas, counties, cities, and villages, census tracts and block numbering areas, block groups, and blocks.

Census tracts and block numbering areas (BNAs) are the most widely used for planning and resource allocation by state agencies, municipalities, and data analysts. BNAs are small statistical subdivisions of a county for grouping and numbering blocks in non-metropolitan counties where local census statistical area committees have not established census tracts.

The Bureau of the Census publishes data for census tracts and BNAs in a publication series entitled "Population and Housing Characteristics for Census Tracts and Block Numbering Areas." The data are also summarized for five-digit zip codes throughout the country on computer tapes and read-only compact disks.

On-Line Sources of Data Information

The on-line sources listed provide information on survey and census data. Many of these Web sites include public-use data files which can be used for the purposes of secondary data analysis on substance abuse.

Survey Data On-Line Sources

The National Household Survey on Drug Abuse reports and data sources can be accessed through the Web at <http://www.samhsa.gov>. At the bottom right of the Web page, click on Office of Applied Studies (OAS) link. That will take you to another Web page with data sets and information listed on the left hand side. The NHSDA data and other data sources are noted on the left hand side of the page.

The Monitoring the Future (MTF) survey, funded by research grants through the National Institute on Drug Abuse, is conducted by the University of Michigan's Institute for Social Research (ISR). The ISR Web site is located at <http://monitoringthefuture.org>. Information on the Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS) can be accessed at <http://www.cdc.gov/nccdphp/dash/yrbs/index.htm>.

Census Data On-Line Sources

A variety of online services is available through the Bureau of the Census' Web site at <http://www.census.gov>. Under the "search" option, for example, a person can enter key words to access online documents or search for information on identifiers (e.g., localities, zip codes). Under the "Ask the Experts" option, a person can transmit questions or comments via e-mail, get on mailing lists, and contact regional offices, State Census Data Centers, National Census Information Centers, and other information services. Updated census information can be accessed through the State Census Data Center.

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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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