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# THE EXTENT OF SUBSTANCE ABUSE PROBLEMS

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As the country begins the 21<sup>st</sup> century, clearly the problems of substance abuse remain widespread. During year 2001:

- Nationwide, an estimated 16.6 million persons or 7.3% of the population age 12 or older were classified with dependence on, or abuse of, either alcohol or illicit drugs.<sup>1</sup>
- Over half of American young people had tried an illicit drug by the time they finished high school, more than one third had tried inhalants and nearly two-thirds had tried cigarettes.<sup>2</sup>
- Michigan state-funded treatment programs admitted 59,821 persons for outpatient, intensive outpatient, and residential services. Alcohol continued to be the most frequently reported (49.3%) primary substance abuse at the time of admission, followed by cocaine (17.3%), marijuana (14.3%), and heroin (13.1%).<sup>3</sup> Many other individuals sought treatment through private providers or self help groups.
- The most commonly used substances among Michigan public school students (grades 6, 8, 10, and 12 from 58 sampled schools from all parts of the state participating in a recent survey) were alcohol, cigarettes, and marijuana.<sup>4</sup>

## **Alcohol**

*Alcohol is the most commonly used psychoactive substance. Its use is associated with motor vehicle accidents, injuries, and deaths; with problems in school and in the workplace; and with fighting, crime, and other serious consequences. Early onset of heavy drinking may be especially problematic, potentially increasing the likelihood of negative outcomes.<sup>5</sup> People who begin drinking before age 15 are four times more likely to develop alcoholism than those who begin at 21.<sup>6</sup> Prenatal exposure to alcohol is one of the leading preventable causes of birth defects, mental retardation, and neurodevelopmental disorders in the United States.<sup>7</sup>*

### **Nationwide**

- Nationally, the average age at which young people begin to drink is 13.1 years old.<sup>8</sup>
- The 2001 Monitoring the Future survey showed that 79.7% of high school seniors had used alcohol in their lifetime and 73% had drunk during the last year.<sup>9</sup>
- Alcohol use by young people is a major concern because it is a major contributing factor in about half of all motor vehicle crashes, suicides and homicides—the leading cause of death and disability among young people.<sup>10</sup>
- Almost one quarter (23%) of sexually active teens and young adults ages 15–24 (about 5.6 million) report having unprotected sex because they were drinking or using drugs at the time.<sup>11</sup>
- According to the 1999 National Crime Victimization Survey, 16% of victims of violent crimes reported alcohol use by the offender and an additional 5.5% reported alcohol and drug use.<sup>12</sup>

### **Michigan**

- Michigan has shown a greater percentage of binge drinkers and chronic drinkers among persons 18 years and older than the nationwide average every year for the last ten years.<sup>13</sup>
- One out of four Michigan students (26.9%) claim to have had their first drink of alcohol before age 13 (other than a few sips).<sup>14,15</sup>
- Of Michigan public school students 6th through 12th grade surveyed, 54% drank alcohol during their lifetime, 31% had drunk during the month prior, 15% had been binge drinking during the two weeks prior, according to one survey.<sup>16</sup> Another survey showed that 77% of students reported having at least one drink of alcohol on one or more days during their life and 46% had drunk during the month prior.<sup>17</sup>

## **Crashes/Injuries**

### **Nationwide**

- In 1999, 22% of 16-20-year-old passenger vehicle drivers fatally injured in crashes had high blood alcohol concentrations (BAC .10% or more). Teenage drivers with 0.05-0.10% BACs are far more likely than sober teenage drivers to be killed in single-vehicle crashes—18 times more likely for males, 54 times more likely for females.<sup>18</sup>
- Approximately one-third of unintentional injuries (including vehicle crashes, falls, drownings, burns and gunshot wounds) are estimated to be alcohol-related.<sup>19</sup>

### **Michigan**

- During the first 9 months of 2002, 32.8% of the fatal crashes in Michigan were alcohol or drug involved.<sup>20</sup>

## **Tobacco**

*Smoking has serious long-term consequences, including the risk of smoking-related diseases and the risk of premature death, as well as causing increased health care costs associated with treating the illnesses.<sup>21</sup> Many adults who are addicted to tobacco today began smoking as adolescents, and it is estimated that more than 5 million of today's underage smokers will die of tobacco-related illnesses.<sup>22</sup> Women who smoke during pregnancy are at risk for premature birth, pregnancy complications, low-birthweight infants, stillbirth, and a higher rate of infant mortality.<sup>23</sup>*

### ***Nationwide***

- An estimated 66.5 million Americans 12 years or older reported current use of a tobacco product in 2001.<sup>24</sup>
- In the United States, more than 80% of persons who have ever tried a cigarette smoked their first cigarette before age 18.<sup>25</sup>

### ***Michigan***

- The rate of cigarette smoking (24.1%) in Michigan was higher than the national average (23.2%) during year 2000. Among those smokers that smoke everyday, 58.6% attempted to quit.<sup>26</sup>
- From 1990 to 1998, a higher percentage of mothers in Michigan (22.6% to 17%) smoked during pregnancy than the national average (18.4% to 12.9%).<sup>27</sup>
- The 2001 Michigan Youth Risk Behavior Survey showed that 64% of high school students had tried cigarette smoking and 20% were daily smokers.<sup>28</sup>
- States are required by federal law to reduce the illegal sales of tobacco products to minors to no more than 20%.<sup>29</sup> Michigan has reduced illegal sales to minors from 41% reported in 1997 to 26.8% reported in 2001 and 17.2% reported in 2002.<sup>30</sup>

## **Illicit Drugs**

*General Population Use of Illicit Drugs: The 2000 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Administration's National Household Survey on Drug Abuse showed that 87 million Americans age 12 and older or 39% of the population reported illicit drug use at least once in their lifetime and 11% reported use of a drug within the past year. The 1994 and 1997 Survey showed that 70% of illicit drug users, age 18–49, were employed full time.<sup>31</sup> During 2001, nearly 42% of persons nationwide reported having used illicit drugs.<sup>32</sup>*

*Crime and Illicit Drugs: In 2001, the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Reports (UCR) estimated that there were 1,586,900 state and local arrests for drug abuse violations in the United States. Drug abuse violations include offenses related to unlawful possession, sale, use, growing, manufacturing, and making of narcotic drugs including opium or cocaine and their derivatives, marijuana, synthetic narcotics, and dangerous non-narcotic drugs such as barbiturates. More than 80% of drug law violations arrests are for possession violations.<sup>33</sup> In 1997, 19% of the State prisoners and 16% of Federal inmates said they committed their current offense to obtain money for drugs.<sup>34</sup> In 1999, 13% of all jail inmates had committed an offense to get money for drugs.<sup>35</sup> A 1997 study of four cities including Detroit, showed that nearly one third of all homicide cases involved some form of drug circumstances—the use or sale of drugs, or the presence of drugs at the crime scene.<sup>36</sup> Of mothers in State prisons, 32% reported committing their crime to get drugs or money for drugs, compared to 19% of fathers.<sup>37</sup> Of adult females tested for drugs at the time of their arrest, the most commonly detected drugs were cocaine, followed by marijuana and methamphetamine. Among males, the drugs most frequently detected were marijuana and cocaine.<sup>38</sup>*

## **Marijuana**

*Marijuana use poses both health and cognitive risks, particularly for damage to pulmonary functions as a result of chronic use.<sup>39</sup>*

### ***Nationwide***

- In 2001, an estimated 33.2% of the population age 12 and older reported using marijuana at least once in the past month.<sup>40</sup>
- The 2001 Monitoring the Future survey found that 37% of all high school seniors reported having used marijuana during the last year.<sup>41</sup>
- Two surveys of inmates in state and federal correctional facilities found that 39% and 30% had used marijuana during the month before the offense and 15% and 11% had used at the time of the offense.<sup>42</sup>

### ***Michigan***

- Marijuana remains the top illicit drug of abuse both in Detroit/Wayne County and across Michigan.<sup>43</sup>
- During 2001, the Wayne County Department of Criminal Justice Juvenile Detention Facility drug testing data showed that 45% of the 4,274 youth tested were found positive for marijuana.<sup>44</sup>
- The most frequently used illicit drug reported used by Michigan public school students during their lifetime was marijuana (24%) and of these 40% had first used between the ages of 13 and 14.<sup>45</sup>

## **Cocaine**

Cocaine use is linked with health problems that range from eating disorders to disability to death from heart attacks and strokes.<sup>46</sup>

### **Nationwide**

- In 2001, an estimated 4% of the population age 12 and older reported using cocaine, including crack, at least once in the past month.<sup>47</sup>
- In 2001, the number of cocaine related emergency department episodes increased to 638,484—constituting 30% of all drug related ER visits.<sup>48</sup>
- The 2001 Monitoring the Future survey found that 4.8% of all high school seniors reported having used cocaine during the last year.<sup>49</sup>
- A survey of inmates in state and federal correctional facilities found that 25% and 20% had used cocaine/crack during the month before the offense and 15% and 9% had used at the time of the offense.<sup>50</sup>

### **Michigan**

- During 2001, cocaine/crack remained the top illicit drug among statewide admissions to state funded treatment programs (18% of total).<sup>51</sup>

## **Other Drugs**

### **Nationwide**

- The number of persons nationwide reporting they had tried ecstasy increased from 6.5 million in year 2000 to 8.1 million in 2001.<sup>52</sup>
- The number of persons reporting use of oxycontin for nonmedical purposes at least once in their lifetime increased fourfold from 1999 to 2001.<sup>53</sup>

### **Michigan**

- Among club drugs, indicators reflect increasing abuse in Michigan of ecstasy.<sup>54</sup> In 2001, about one out of seven Michigan high school students had tried club drugs.<sup>55</sup>
- Since about 2000, oxycodone (Oxycontin—a semisynthetic opioid painkiller) has been increasingly reported by law enforcement agencies in arrests, primarily in west and northern lower Michigan. The Michigan Emergency Department data for southeast Michigan shows that the numbers of oxycodone mentions had more than doubled in year 2000 compared to each of the previous four years.<sup>56</sup>
- Since 1998, there have been several indicators of increasing ketamine use (a rapid acting anesthetic with analgesic and amnesic properties)—break-ins at veterinary clinics, calls to poison control, and hospitalizations. GHB and GBL use (central nervous system depressant known as a date rape drug) peaked in 1999 with the number of cases mentioned in both emergency departments and poison control reports.<sup>57</sup>
- Heroin as the primary drug among treatment admissions accounted for 14% of admissions statewide at state funded treatment programs.<sup>58</sup>

## **Substance Abuse Glossary<sup>59</sup>**

**ATOD:** Acronym for “alcohol, tobacco, and other drugs.” **Binge drinking:** Consuming five or more drinks on one occasion. **Chronic drinking:** Consuming 60 or more drinks in a 30-day period. **Club drugs:** So called because they are most commonly used at parties and “raves” (all-night dances); include MDMA (“ecstasy”), ketamine, methamphetamine, LSD, GHB, and Rohypnol (the latter two are considered “date rape” drugs). **Dependence:** Physical dependence occurs when the body adapts to alcohol or other drugs and requires greater amounts to achieve the same effect or function; psychological dependence occurs when the user needs the substance to feel good or normal. **Heavy drinking:** Consuming five or more drinks on one occasion at least five times in the previous 30 days. **Substance abuse:** Patterns of alcohol and other drug use that impair one’s health or one’s social, psychological, or occupational functioning.

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