



Emergent Drug Use: *Building Capacity for Community Response in Hartford, Connecticut*

Issue

Illicit drug use is a continually changing behavior. Notable changes include the introduction and spread of new drugs and drug combinations, discovery of new ways to use existing drugs, and development of new populations of drug users. Unfortunately, public health response to emergent drug-related epidemics is slow and fragmented. Indeed, there is growing recognition of the need for new public health surveillance mechanisms that would allow the rapid identification of emergent behavioral trends in drug use, the assessment of their health and other consequences, and the implementation of participatory community responses.

“The only way a community can effectively deal with its drug problems is to start by determining exactly what it is confronting and then tailor its strategies to its own particular situation.”

Dr. Alan I. Leshner
Director, National Institute on Drug Abuse

Response

A team of researchers from the Hispanic Health Council in Hartford, Connecticut, and the Connecticut Department of Public Health are engaged in an innovative research project to develop new methods for enhancing surveillance and community response related to emergent drug use. Information on emergent drug use will be collected via observation and interviews and used to develop a community-based public health response to the problem.

The specific aims of the project include the following:

- Develop innovative approaches to identify and track emergent drug use trends;
- Describe emergent drug use trends using key traits and characteristics, such as age, gender, ethnicity, and neighborhood of residence;
- Develop a Participatory Community Response Team composed of researchers, health professionals, and community members to develop and implement community-based responses to emergent drug use; and
- Evaluate the project as a transferable community-based public health approach for identifying and responding to emergent drug use.

This project responds directly to the recognized need for research on developing new methods for enhancing public health surveillance, needs assessments, program delivery, evaluation, and translation of research for effective intervention.

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More Information

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This research grant is funded through the second round of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) Extramural Prevention Research Program (EPRP). The EPRP is committed to funding prevention research that has direct relevance for policy and practice by having researchers invite health professionals and communities to participate in the research process - including identifying research questions of importance to their community and interpreting and applying the study findings in their community. The EPRP supports many such community-based research grants throughout the United States.

For more information about CDC's EPRP, please contact the Office of Science and Extramural Research, Public Health Practice Program Office, CDC, 4770 Buford Highway, NE, MS K-56, Atlanta, GA 30341-3724
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