

SUBSTANCE ABUSE

SOME CONTEXT...

Abuse of opiates (both prescription and illegal) is a key issue in Appalachia. Abuse rates are higher in Appalachia than the rest of the nation, and rates are increasing within the region at a faster pace when compared to the United States as a whole. (NORC, 2010)

Proportionately more Appalachian adults abuse prescription drugs than in the nation as a whole and addiction and abuse rates are higher among adolescents than adults in Appalachia. (NORC, 2010)

In the five years under study, deaths from accidental drug overdose rose 550% in West Virginia, 295% in the Appalachian counties of Virginia and 164% in Kentucky. (CDC, 2007)

Findings demonstrate that adolescents in distressed and at-risk Appalachian counties compared to adolescents in other Appalachian counties have the highest rate of non-medical use of prescription drugs. (NORC, 2010)

Poverty, depression, mental illness and drug and alcohol abuse reinforce each other, especially in these coal mining regions of central Appalachia. The higher incidence of prescription drug abuse directly affected the region's ability to improve its economy. Communities cannot grow if there is a major substance-abuse problem. (Appalachian Regional Commission, 2010)

Proportionately more Appalachian adults in need of alcohol treatment receive treatment, as compared to adults in the rest of nation. (NORC, 2008)

Community-level substance abuse and mental health leaders do not generally use nationally-available data sets to make decisions about local response to substance abuse and mental health issues. While they may use state data, especially when it supports applications for grant funding for prevention programs, more often than not, anecdotal evidence is used as the basis for informing local decision making. (NORC, 2008)

Access to treatment is better in Appalachia when compared to the rest of the nation in terms of accepted forms of payment, and the provision of services such as substance abuse family counseling and mental health assessment. However, within Appalachia, there are regional difficulties in accessing both inpatient and outpatient treatment. (NORC, 2008)

Future work should further explore community best practices in the prevention of substance abuse and mental health illness to address and prevent these problems in Appalachia. (NORC, 2008)

Sources: National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago, "An Analysis of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Disparities & Access to Treatment Services in the Appalachian Region" – 2008 & 2010, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) "Unintentional Poisoning Deaths" Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report - 2007

FROM THE FIELD...

Challenges

Opportunities