

### Prescription and Illicit Opiate Drug Abuse in Young Washtenaw County Residents

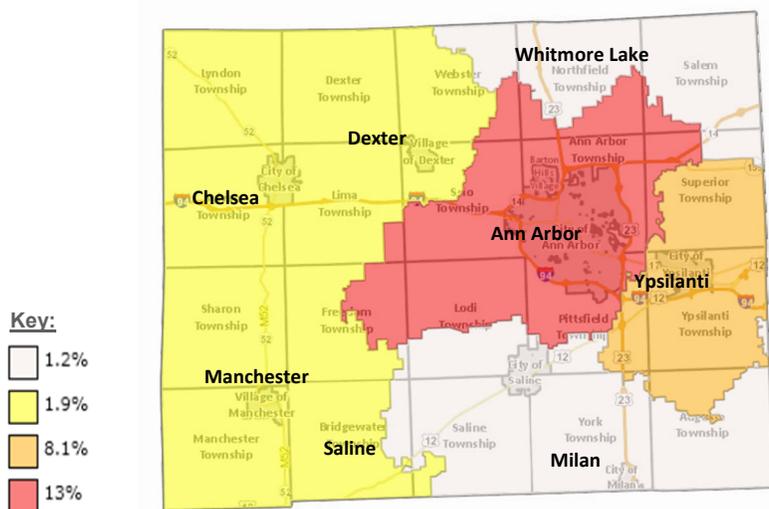
- Washtenaw County youth are abusing opiates:** Approximately 5-10% of Washtenaw County middle and high school students have misused prescription drugs such as painkillers and stimulants (Michigan Department of Education, Michigan Profile for Health Youth Report, 2009-2010).
- Washtenaw County opiate users seeking treatment are younger:** The average age for publicly funded substance abuse treatment admissions has decreased for both prescription (32.2 yrs in 2005; 29.4 yrs in 2012) and illicit opiates (34.3 yrs in 2005; 31.1 yrs in 2012) between 2005-2012. The same is not true for alcohol, marijuana or stimulant related treatment admissions (Washtenaw Community Health Organization, Internal Communication, 2012).
- Hepatitis C has increased in Washtenaw County young adults:** The proportion of Washtenaw County Hepatitis C cases that were reported for young adults (<30 years) has more than doubled between 2006-2011. Hepatitis C is most frequently transmitted through intravenous drug use (Washtenaw County Public Health, Internal Communication, 2012).
- Washtenaw County drug related deaths nearly doubled from 2004-2009:** The number of Washtenaw County residents' drug related deaths increased 80% between 2004-2009 (22 drug related deaths in 2004; 40 drug related deaths in 2009). The number of Washtenaw County residents' drug related deaths exceeded the number of motor vehicle fatalities beginning in 2005 (Washtenaw County Public Health, Michigan Department of Community Health, Mortality Data).

*"We see many of the same families over and over. There is often a history of family problems... kids' mental illness undiagnosed and they self-medicate. The kids start stealing prescription drugs at home. Eventually the kids shift to heroin because it is cheaper and more available."*

*Washtenaw County Law Enforcement Officer, April 2012*

**"In the past 12 months, have you used any medicines, drugs, or substances, to get high or to make you feel good, without a prescription or with greater frequency or quantity than prescribed?"**

Source: Washtenaw County Adults by County Region  
2010 HIP Survey



### Heroin casts its footprint in Washtenaw County

**According to 2012 Washtenaw County Public Health Report, entitled 'Opiates in the Cupboard:'**

- The proportion of publicly funded substance abuse treatment admissions for heroin increased 40% between 2006-2011.
- The 2011-2012 average age for hospital emergency room and inpatient admissions for heroin overdoses for Washtenaw County residents was significantly younger than for stimulants, other opiates, steroids and depressants.
- Arrests in Washtenaw County for heroin possession increased 80% between 2007 and 2010.
- Arrests for heroin sales/manufacturing increased 375% during 2007-2010.

## What the Research Reveals

A recent 2011 White House Report entitled *“Epidemic: Responding to America’s Prescription Drug Abuse Crisis,”* expands upon the Administration’s National Drug Control Strategy and includes action in four major areas to reduce prescription drug abuse: education, monitoring, proper disposal, and enforcement:

- **Education** — It is critical for the public and for healthcare providers to increase awareness about the dangers of prescription drug abuse, and about ways to appropriately dispense, store, and dispose of controlled substance medications.
- **Prescription Drug Monitoring** — Monitoring programs will help to identify “doctor shoppers” and detect therapeutic duplication and drug-drug interactions.
- **Prescription Drug Disposal** — May help to limit the diversion of drugs, as most non-medical users appear to be getting drugs from family and friends.
- **Law Enforcement Agencies** — Require support and tools to expand their efforts to shut down “pill mills” and to stop “doctor shoppers” who contribute to drug trafficking.

### **Related Washtenaw County HIP Year 2020 Health Objectives**

#### **Healthy Kids**

- ⇒ Reduce the proportion of high school students who have ever taken prescription drug such as Oxycontin, Codeine, Percocet, Vicodin or Tylenol III without doctor’s prescription from 6.2% to 4.8%.

#### **Healthy Adults**

- ⇒ Reduce illicit drug use in Washtenaw County adults 18-29 years from 15% to 7% by 2010.

*“Back in the early 1990’s, we had very few heroin addicts, very few prescription drug addicts, and if we did, they were usually older. Then in late 1990s, the price of heroin plummeted and purity of street heroin increased. Before that, the only way to use heroin was to inject. But when purity increased, people could smoke and snort it. So the threshold of experimentation lowered.. Last year was the first year that opiates was the number one primary drug (for treatment admissions). It has ALWAYS been alcohol in the past.”*

*Washtenaw County Treatment Provider, April 2012*

## Local and State Educational and Collaborative Strategies

### **Livingston/Washtenaw Coordinated Funding Agency:**

Substance abuse prevention and treatment agencies work with local communities, schools, law enforcement agencies, and others to implement multiple strategies including community educational initiatives about types of prescription drugs abused, access points, health consequences of abuse, and the proper disposal of medication. Funding priorities include interventions that decrease prescription and over-the-counter drug abuse.

For more information, go to: <http://washtenawcho.org> and click on “Services,” “Substance Abuse Services,” and then “Prevention.”



### **State of Michigan:**

The state’s [Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drug Abuse Strategic Plan’s](#) overarching goals include: Increase Multi-System Collaboration, Broaden Statewide Media Messages, Broaden Rx/OTC Drug Abuse Education and Use of Brief Screenings, and Increase Access and Use Michigan Automated Prescription System (MAPS).

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