

Drug Abuse Patterns and Trends in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties, Florida— Update: January 2013

James N. Hall

For inquiries regarding this report, please contact James N. Hall, Epidemiologist, Center for Applied Research on Substance Use and Health Disparities, Nova Southeastern University, 13584 SW 114 Terrace, Miami, FL 33186, Phone: 786-547-7249, E-mail: upfrontin@aol.com.

Updated Drug Abuse Trends and Emerging Patterns: The decline of **cocaine** indicators since 2007 continued but slowed across the State of Florida and in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties during the most recent reporting periods. Cocaine-related fatalities declined 7-percent in Miami-Dade and 9-percent in Broward between 2010 and 2011. Cocaine was considered the cause of death in 56 percent of the 115 Broward County deaths in which the drug was detected and in 27 percent of the 184 such deaths in Miami-Dade County. At least one other drug was also found present in all cocaine-related deaths in both Counties. Cocaine was the most prevalent illicit drug detected in 2010 DAWN Emergency Department reports with 5,702 (or 71 percent of all) non-alcohol illicit drug reports in Miami-Dade and 4,081 (or 60 percent of all) illicit reports in Broward and Palm Beach Counties. These cocaine reports represented a 12-percent decrease in Miami-Dade and a 9-percent decrease in the Ft. Lauderdale Division of DAWN compared to the previous year. Total primary cocaine treatment admissions for both Counties declined 44-percent between 2009 and 2012, and 19-percent between 2011 and 2012. Cocaine Crime laboratory reports accounted for 48.9 percent of all National Forensic Laboratory Information System (NFLIS) substances identified in Miami-Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach Counties during the first half of 2012. Efforts to control the supply and nonmedical misuse of prescription opioids have led to an increase in **heroin** use and problems during recent months across Florida. With fewer diverted prescription opioids available, addicts have turned to heroin as the cheaper opiate. The first signs of this shift may be seen in the increases for primary heroin addiction treatment during the first half of 2012. There was a 36-percent increase in such cases in Miami-Dade County and a 78-percent increase in Broward County between 2011 and 2012 based on projections from the 154 cases in Miami-Dade and 158 in Broward during the first six months of 2012. The relative low number of heroin deaths decreased in both Miami-Dade and Broward Counties between 2010 and 2011 but increased by 7-percent statewide with the most significant rises in Palm Beach County and the Orlando area. Florida's Prescription Drug Monitoring Program became operational in autumn 2011, and various other public health and legal regulations took effect. As a result, enforcement activities substantially reduced the diversion of **prescription opioids** and **benzodiazepines**. These supply-side strategies have started to make nonmedical prescription medications far more expensive and difficult to obtain. In 2011, 5,489 persons died in Florida with one or more prescription drugs detected; this represented a 3-percent decrease compared with the previous year. In Miami-Dade County, the number of prescription drug-related deaths decreased by 13-percent, from 359 to 312. Broward County tied with Hillsborough County (Tampa) for highest number of such deaths in the State with 431 decedents each, representing an 8-percent decrease compared with 2010 in Broward and a nearly 8-percent increase in Tampa. There were 6,333 occurrences of prescription opioids detected among decedents in Florida during 2011, a 3-percent decrease from 2010. Included in that total were 2,128 occurrences of oxycodone (e.g., OxyContin®, Roxicodone®, Percocet®), which represented an 11-percent decrease from 2010. Buprenorphine (e.g., Subutex®, Suboxone®) Medical Examiner (ME) reports accounted for the greatest increase of opioid-related occurrences, with a relatively few 27 cases in 2011 representing a 69-percent increase from 2010. The second greatest increase in prescription

opioid-related ME reports was with Tramadol (e.g., Ultram®, Ultracet®) with 379 occurrences or a 38-percent increase over the number for 2010. There were 621 primary prescription opioid treatment admissions in Broward County during the first half of 2012 and 115 in Miami-Dade County; the Broward admissions were a 35-percent reduction from the second half of 2011 and the Miami-Dade admissions were a 42-percent reduction over the same period. Injection drug use was the route of administration for 57 percent of the Broward prescription opioid treatment clients and 23 percent of those in Miami-Dade. The 5,949 reports of a benzodiazepine present in deceased persons across Florida in 2011 was a 4-percent decrease compared to 2010 and including 1,879 alprazolam (e.g., Xanax®) occurrences, 905 for nordiazepam (e.g., Nordaz®), and 891 for diazepam (e.g., Valium®). Over the same two-year period, total alprazolam occurrences decreased 14-percent while those for nordiazepam increased 19-percent and diazepam occurrences declined 2-percent. In Miami-Dade County, alprazolam occurrences decreased 8-percent, totaling 114 in 2011 and declined 15-percent in Broward County where they totaled 199. Consequences of **methamphetamine** abuse remained very low and stable in both Counties. However, problematic methamphetamine abuse among some local and tourist sexually active gay males is reported by counselors and therapists. There were more primary treatment admissions for **marijuana** in both counties in the first half of 2012 than for any other drug, including alcohol. Sixty-two percent of the marijuana treatment clients were juveniles younger than 18. Past 30 day use of marijuana rose from 15.3 percent to 19 percent from 2010 to 2012 among Broward County high school students and from 13.6 percent to 17.8 percent among those in Miami-Dade County. More Florida high school students reported riding with a driver in the past 30 days who had been using marijuana (25.4 percent) than one who had been drinking alcohol (21.4 percent). Likewise more reported driving in the past month after using marijuana (11.2 percent) than drinking alcohol (8.1 percent). Statewide, there were 517 poison control center exposure cases for **synthetic cannabinoids (cannabimimetics)** in 2011 and 537 in 2012 including 82 in Miami-Dade and Broward Counties. More than two-thirds of these 2012 poison exposure calls were in the first half of the year. There were 76 drug reports by NFLIS laboratories for **MDMA** or ecstasy (3,4-methylenedioxymethamphetamine) and 50 for **BZP** (1-benzylpiperazine) in the three southeastern Florida counties during the first half of 2012. Capsules sold as “Mollys” are reported to be pure MDMA but 94 items tested by the Broward County’s Sheriff’s Office Crime Lab between March and October 2012 contained **bk-3,4 methylenedioxy-methcathinone or methylone**. Miami-Dade had 276 methylone crime lab cases in 2012 sold as “Mollys” in clear capsules. Retail sales of cannabimimetics and cathinimimetics (“bath salts”) have been banned by successful local municipal and county ordinances in 2012 that have shift their distribution from stores to illicit street sales. Injection drug use accounted for 15.4 percent of the 33,669 cumulative **AIDS cases** in Miami-Dade County as of December 2012, and the dual category of injection drug users (IDUs) and men who have sex with other men (MSM) accounted for an additional 3.9 percent.

Data Sources: **Drug-related death data** are from the Florida Medical Examiners Commission 2011 Report on Drugs Identified in Deceased Persons by Florida Medical Examiners, from the Florida Department of Law Enforcement, released August 2011. **Data on drug-related emergency department** are from the SAMHSA 2010 DAWN Report released in October 2012. **Treatment data** by primary drug of admission for the first half of 2012 are from the Florida Department of Children and Families (FL-DCF) for all publicly funded treatment programs. **Crime laboratory data** were provided for the Miami/Fort Lauderdale/Pompano Beach MSA by NFLIS, Drug Enforcement Administration, for January–June 2012. **Poison exposure call data** for emerging synthetic drugs are from the Florida Poison Information Center–Miami. **School Survey data** are from the 2012 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey by the FL-DCF released January 2013. **Reports of HIV/AIDS** related to injection drug use are from the Miami-Dade County Health Department.