

INDICATORS OF ALCOHOL AND OTHER DRUG RISK AND CONSEQUENCES OF CA COUNTIES (2007)

Introduction

In the mid-1990s, the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, in collaboration with the Center for Applied Research Solutions (CARS), Inc. began to work toward improving the state's prevention information system. A key component of this information system was the continuous collection, monitoring and reporting of selected community-level indicators that would serve as direct and indirect measures of alcohol and other drug use prevalence and related problems. This information system was designed to assist with state and local prevention planning and policy-making by providing useful, systematic data about prevention and treatment needs and outcomes throughout the state.

The present report is the most recent product of this ongoing effort. It differs from earlier versions in a few important ways. First, while previous reports typically summarized data for more than twenty-five indicators of health and social conditions that are theoretically linked to problem substance use, the current version is more streamlined, focusing on eight key indicators of AOD use and abuse prevalence and their direct consequences, including impacts on the criminal justice, health and alcohol and drug treatment systems. Second, the 2007 report updates information contained in earlier versions, but expands in its depth to summarize data for populations within the larger county, including age, gender, and race/ethnicity sub-groups. This expanded detail allows for more precise analyses of alcohol and drug use problems within a county population and enhances the ability to effectively target prevention and intervention strategies to community needs. Similar to previous reports, the 2007 version includes simple analytic tools to help users interpret the information presented. This includes use of population-based rates (e.g., the number of incidents relative to the total population) to make meaningful comparisons between geographic areas that differ in population size, or comparisons between differing time points.

Data is presented at both the county and state level to allow county rates to be evaluated against a relative average.

The overall intent of the report is to provide a simple, easy-to-use resource that helps synthesize and interpret the most relevant indicator data currently available to assess substance use problems, in an effort to optimize prevention planning and outcome measurement efforts in communities through the state. Specifically, it is designed to support the work of planners, policy-makers, and practitioners in the field in:

- Determining the incidence of alcohol and other drug use problems within county populations and sub-populations;
- Monitoring trends in problem incidence to identify emergent issues and detect changes in status over time;
- Establishing program resource levels that are appropriate to address the nature and extent of prevention and treatment needs; and,
- Documenting progress toward achieving targeted prevention objectives and outcomes.

The report contains information on several key indicators of alcohol and drug prevalence and consequences for California populations in each of the following six areas:

- Household prevalence of problem alcohol use and use of illicit drugs;
- Admissions to publicly-funded alcohol and drug treatment facilities;
- Arrests for alcohol and drug-related criminal offenses;
- Motor vehicle accidents involving drivers who had been drinking;
- Hospitalizations for alcohol and drug-related conditions; and,
- Mortality attributable to acute and chronic alcohol and drug use.

Each report contains data compiled from several sources, including a statewide, longitudinal survey of California household populations, and state data systems housing public archival records from four central agencies, including the California Department of Justice, the California Highway Patrol, the California Department of Health Services, and the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD). This reliance on statewide data sources ensures that the information reported is drawn from reliable and valid measures that are routinely and uniformly collected across jurisdictions (i.e., all counties use the same data collection), allowing for comparisons over time, across counties, and between counties and the state.