



UPDATE

Computerised Substance Abuse Surveillance System November 2007 – March 2008

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Background

The Alcohol and Drug Abuse Research Unit of the Medical Research Council (MRC) was contracted by the Provincial Department of Social Services and Poverty Alleviation to conduct a study in the Western Cape. The aim of the study was to design and develop a computerised substance abuse surveillance system (SASS) that will be used to monitor substance-related cases in all 16 district social service offices in the Western Cape.

All 16 districts offices received training from the MRC on using the software system and on the data collection process. On average, training groups ranged from 12 - 20 participants and included both intake social workers and probation workers. Training sessions were facilitated by the MRC and Wamtech and participants were provided with an installation CD, user-manual and guidelines on the data collection process as well as a booklet on families and substance abuse.

On completion of the training sessions held by the MRC, immediate capturing of data was to take place at district level. Some of the districts have experienced challenges related to limited resources that have hindered their data collection. Follow up with individual districts is underway to remedy some of the problems experienced.

This update focuses on data collected by 9 of the 16 district offices. The data presented is for the period 27 November 2007 to 31 March 2008. The data should be interpreted in the context of only 9 districts sending information and does not provide a picture of the AOD situation in the province as a whole.

Key Findings

Data captured per district

The Vredendal district office provided data for 56 clients in the period under review. Wynberg district captured data for 43 clients.



Table 1. Intakes by district November 2007 to March 2008)

Data collection forms per district		
Name of district	N	%
Athlone	1	0.5
Bellville	10	4.6
Eerste River	30	13.7
Gugulethu	24	11.0
Paarl	22	10.0
Vredenburg	30	13.7
Vredendal	56	25.6
Worcester	3	1.4
Wynberg	43	19.6
TOTAL	219	100

Socio-demographic profile of clients seeking social work intervention

During this review period, the majority of clients seeking help from the 9 district offices were female (58%) and Coloured (74%). Twenty-three per cent of clients were Black/African. The majority of clients were unemployed (41%) and 52% were single.

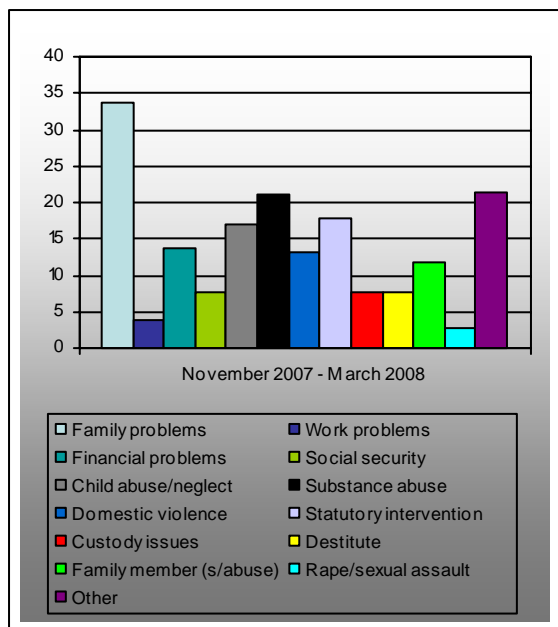
The average age for clients presenting at district offices was 32.4 years. Of the 46 clients with alcohol and drug problems, 18 (39.1%) were under the age of 20 years.

Presenting problems across the districts

Figure 1 provides an indication of the type of presenting problems seen at the 9 district offices in the Western Cape. Across districts, clients mostly seek services for family related problems (33.8%), and substance abuse problems (21%). Twenty-one per cent of clients stated their presenting problems as 'other', which referred to clients in conflict with the law (9.6%) and various other problems, such as behaviour related problems (2.7%).



Fig. 1. Problems presenting at district offices (%)



Proportion of clients with AOD problems at district level

Twenty-one per cent of all the clients who visited the district offices *presented* with AOD (alcohol and other drug) related problems. Pertaining to *current use* of AODs, 28.3% of clients reported using AODs at the time of the intake session.

Table 2 below provides a breakdown of the percentage of clients reporting AOD use in each of the 9 districts.

Table 2. Proportion of clients reporting current AOD use by district

District Office	No. of clients currently using drugs		Total
	Not using AOD*	Using AOD*	
Athlone	0	1	1
Bellville	6	4	10
Eerste River	13	17	30
Gugulethu	21	3	24
Paarl	19	3	22
Vredenburg	22	8	30
Vredendal	40	16	56
Worcester	0	3	3
Wynberg	36	7	43
Total	157	62	219

*AOD: Alcohol and Other Drugs

The majority of AOD cases were reported at the Eerste River district office (17/30).

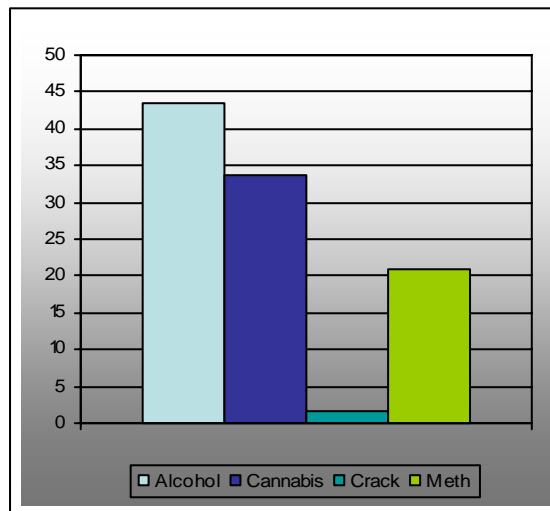
Conclusions & Next Steps: A thank you to the districts who have been so diligent in capturing and sending their data - particularly the Vredendal office! We encourage districts to make contact with us should they require a booster session. The substance abuse surveillance system will also be rolled out to NGOs in 6 identified districts. These NGO's and districts were selected by the Department of Social

Primary substance of abuse across districts (%)

Across districts, of all the clients using AODs ($n= 62$), 43.5% reported alcohol as the primary substance of use, followed by cannabis (33.8%). Twenty-one per cent of clients had 'tik' as a primary substance of abuse.

Vredendal reported the highest alcohol related cases ($n=15$) and in Eerste River, 16 clients reported cannabis as their primary substance of abuse.

Fig. 2. Primary substance of abuse across districts (%)



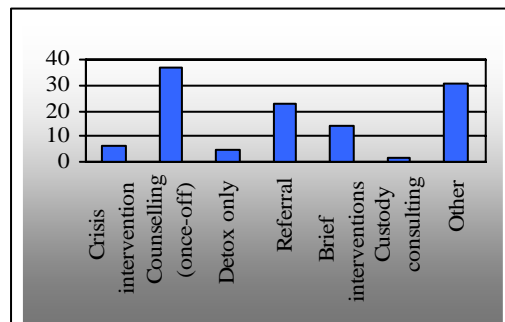
Problems associated with primary substance of abuse

Clients presenting at the district offices with substance abuse problems were more likely to have family related problems (53%). Thirty-seven per cent of clients using AOD were in trouble with the law and 26% reported having financial problems.

Social work services rendered to substance using clients

Figure 3 below shows the type of services rendered to clients at the district offices.

Fig 3. Services rendered to substance abusing clients (%)



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