

YOUTH ADDICTION RISE REPORTED DETROIT - THEY FIND 'RELIEF, COMFORT AND CARE THROUGH SUBSTANCE ABUSE,' OFFICIAL SAYS

Detroit Free Press (MI) - Wednesday, November 28, 2007

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The number of young Detroiters treated for substance abuse **addictions** - ranging from alcohol to marijuana to crack cocaine and heroin - nearly quadrupled in the past three years, according to a public health study released Tuesday.

In 2003, 42 people ages 12 to 18 were treated. A year later, the number rose to 179. Last year it was 377.

The numbers come from treatment and prevention providers, state and **Detroit** health departments and telephone and street surveys.

Though the numbers could be considered small, health officials said many other teens are addicted but yet to receive treatment.

"Today the problem becomes increasingly important for 12-14-year-olds," said Phyllis Meadows, director and health officer for the **Detroit** Department of Health and Wellness Promotion. "Those are young people, for whatever reason, who are finding relief, comfort and care through substance abuse."

Meadows and about 50 substance abuse treatment providers gathered at the Charles H. Wright Museum of African American History on Tuesday to discuss findings of a community drug assessment done for the department's Bureau of Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment & Recovery.

The department used a study conducted by the Eastern Michigan University School of Social Work.

The study also surveyed students from three dozen **Detroit** schools in grades 6 through 12 about their drug and alcohol use. Of those, 20.3% admitted using tobacco; 30.3% said they had consumed beer; 30.4% said they had consumed wine, and 22.1% said they had hard alcohol. In addition, 14.5% acknowledged using marijuana.

Drug use among **youths** often coincides with problems such as being expelled from school, failing a class and getting into arguments with friends and family.

Adults substance abuse also appears to be growing.

In 2004-06, substance-abuse related arrests in **Detroit** almost doubled, rising to 4,595 in 2006 from 2,560 arrests in 2004. Arrests for marijuana-related offenses - mostly possession - made up nearly half of all the substance-abuse arrests.

"Within the public health community in **Detroit** , we know substance abuse and the associated problems are a significant public health issue," said Calvin Trent, general manager of the **Detroit** Health and Wellness Promotion's Bureau of Substance Abuse Prevention, Treatment & Recovery.

"The health department cannot solve the problem of substance abuse alone," Trent said.

"We need the schools. We need mental health agencies. We need our law enforcement community. We need the courts. We need everyone to have and embrace one plan to address these issues."

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(SIDEBAR)

Addiction numbers

*During 2004-06, 16,055 Detroiters were admitted to substance-abuse treatment programs, according to the **Detroit** Department of Health and Wellness Promotion.

*The majority had either crack cocaine (31.2%) or heroin (30.5%) **addictions** .

*More than 40% of the individuals admitted to prevention and treatment programs in **Detroit** had a family history of drug and alcohol problems.

*Homeless persons made up about 16% and ex-prisoners 26.3% of the total treated.

Need help?

Detroit residents should call 800-467-2452 for recordings that tell what to do in a substance emergency and where to seek help. Other state residents should call 888-736-0253.

MEMO: SHORTER VERSION RAN IN METRO FINAL EDITION, PAGE 3B

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Edition: METRO EDITION

Section: NWS; NEWS

Page: 1B

Index Terms: Detroit ; juvenile; addict; age; statistic;telephone

Record Number: dfp0000510736

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