

Is there a role for Rapid Assessment in devising policy approaches to methamphetamine use?

A data collection and analysis technique intended mainly for use in developing countries to quickly determine the nature, extent and consequences of HIV/AIDS and other health problems may have a useful application in Canada in places where methamphetamine use has emerged as a concern in recent years. This suggestion is made in a new CCSA report entitled *Rapid Assessments of substance abuse issues: Guidelines and resources with an emphasis on the use and abuse of methamphetamine in Canada* by CCSA Associate Alan Ogbourne.

Sometimes referred to as Rapid Situation Assessment, or Rapid Assessment and Response, the technique uses a combination of new or existing quantitative and qualitative data to develop a composite picture of an issue such as illicit drug use. Data collection and analysis may take from one to six months depending on the issues of concern and the resources available, but the emphasis is on quick results. Rapid Assessments use both primary and secondary data. Primary data may be obtained from interviews, focus groups or observations involving key informants and drug users or former users in various settings. Secondary data may include the number or quantity of

drug seizures, arrest figures, changes in drug prices, changes in specific types of crime associated with drug use, number of callers to anonymous help lines, number of people seeking treatment, and number of deaths resulting from drug use.

Rapid Assessments do not replace the need for other ongoing monitoring systems

“Rapid Assessment could be a cost-effective means to fill gaps in knowledge about methamphetamine abuse in Canada.”

and long-term population studies, nor are they intended to present a complete picture of an issue. However, they can provide decision makers with timely and relatively low-cost information that can be used to develop evidence-based programs and policies. Rapid Assessments are particularly useful at the local and community level.

The inspiration for the new report emerged from a meeting of the Canadian Executive

Council on Addictions (CECA) in November 2005, where heads of Canada's addictions agencies discussed the need to address rapidly escalating fears about methamphetamine use, especially in Western Canada. There have been many calls for action against methamphetamine use and a wide range of federal, provincial and municipal initiatives have been proposed or implemented (these are summarized in the report). However, the evidence base for these initiatives is generally weak and there are concerns that this may lead to the inefficient use of scarce resources.

“Rapid Assessment could be used as a cost-effective means to fill gaps in knowledge about methamphetamine abuse in Canada, to compare abuse levels and patterns in different regions and to plan and evaluate new policies and programs,” the report says. “However, the use of Rapid Assessments for other emerging drug problems and especially in contexts where resources for other types of research may be limited (e.g., First Nations communities, municipalities, etc.) is also encouraged.”

Funding for the new CCSA report was provided by the federal Department of Public Safety. The report is available at www.ccsa.ca □

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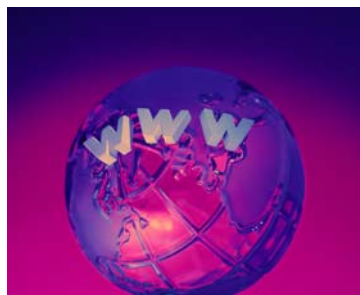
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nationalframework-cadrenational.ca

► The National Framework is managed jointly by Health Canada and CCSA. For more details, including regular updates of National Framework endorsements and activities, visit the new National Framework website at www.nationalframework-cadrenational.ca

National Framework: new endorsements, new constituencies

A total of 26 government and non-government partner organizations from across Canada have so far endorsed the National Framework for Action to Reduce the Harms Associated with Alcohol and Other Drugs and Substances in Canada. As support for the Framework continues to grow, Framework partners are engaged in planning a wide range of new activities, including a second Canadian Drug User Congress.

The First Canadian Drug User Congress took place in May following the 17th International Conference on the Reduction of Drug Related Harm in Vancouver. It was attended by about 25 people who use drugs from around Canada. Among 10 "allies"

also invited to take part in the Congress were representatives of CCSA, the Public Health Agency of Canada, and the Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network.

Carolyn Franklin, CCSA's Senior Advisor to the National Framework Secretariat, says CCSA has made commitments to sponsor a national teleconference of the User Congress Steering Committee every two months for the next year, and to host a second meeting of the Canadian Drug User Congress within two years. In fulfilling this role, CCSA is acting on one of the nine principles of the National Framework, which states that "those most affected (by substance use and abuse) are meaningfully involved".

Other Framework activities include continued progress by the National Alcohol Strategy Working Group on assessing the consequences of alcohol use in Canada (see *Action News* Vol. XV No. 3). The group is currently reviewing a draft of a national alcohol strategy document and is expected to present its final report in the fall.

Also planned is a workshop on improving quality, accessibility and range of options to treat harmful substance use, including substance use disorders. The latest in a series of Framework thematic workshops, it takes place in Toronto, Oct. 24-25, co-hosted by the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health and the B.C. Provincial Health Services Authority. □



► CCSA's Chief Executive Officer **Michel Perron** will chair the Fourth International NGO Forum in his capacity as second vice-chair of the Vienna NGO Committee. The Forum will coincide with the United Nations General Assembly's review of a decade of progress on its historic political declaration of June 1998 to achieve "significant and measurable results" in controlling the production and use of drugs around the world.

Canada promotes valuable role of international NGOs

The upcoming target date of 2008 for the achievement of "significant and measurable results" in global drug control, set by the United Nations General Assembly at a historic special session in June 1998, presents non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the world with an opportunity to increase governments' understanding and awareness of the valuable role of civil society and NGOs in the drug field, says CCSA's Chief Executive Officer Michel Perron, who will chair an International NGO Forum to coincide with the UN's 1998-2008 review of progress by member states.

"This is a chance for the NGO community to reflect on its own achievements in drug control, exchange ideas on promising new approaches, reach agreements on ways to work together and make recommendations to multilateral agencies and UN member states on future directions for drug control," said Mr. Perron. "This target date is (also) a unique opportunity for NGOs to rethink current collaboration mechanisms with UN agencies with a view to establishing a more effective partnership."

The forum, the fourth international NGO forum since 1986, is a joint initiative of the New York NGO Committee

and the Vienna NGO Committee, of which Mr. Perron is vice-chair. About 300 people representing diverse ideological views are expected to attend the event in Vienna.

In March, the UN Commission on Narcotic Drugs formally endorsed a Canadian resolution calling for greater involvement of NGOs in international drug policy. The resolution asks member states to work with NGOs to develop and implement demand reduction policy and programs, and encourages civil society and NGOs to "use their full capacity to raise public awareness regarding the negative consequences of drug abuse". □

TEAM Helen: St. Lucia puts its stamp on the HEP approach

Health, Education and Enforcement in Partnership (HEP) has made another successful foray into the Caribbean with a one-day “train-the-trainer” session and three-day workshop on the island of St. Lucia. Following the March event, St. Lucia launched its own version of HEP called “TEAM (Together Everyone Achieves More) Helen”, and adopted youth as its national priority (St. Lucia is nicknamed Helen of the West Indies—a reference to the embattled Helen of Troy and the fact that St. Lucia changed hands 14 times in wars between the British and the French).

Two years ago, a HEP workshop in Martinique first introduced the uniquely Canadian approach to collaboration to a group of addictions specialists, police and education professionals from seven English-speaking Caribbean countries. At the close of the

2004 workshop, the participating countries endorsed a request from St. Lucia for help in promoting collaborative responses to substance abuse on the island.

Both Caribbean workshops were supported by the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), whose members first heard about CCSA’s national HEP program when the Centre’s Chief Executive Officer Michel Perron addressed a CICAD meeting in November 2003.

CCSA worked with the St.

Lucia Substance Abuse Advisory Secretariat to set objectives for the 2006 workshop, which were based on lessons learned from the national HEP experience in Canada and on extensive telephone interviews with potential workshop participants. A national youth panel—the first of its kind in St. Lucia—played a key role in guiding the workshop.

HEP promotes coordinated action on substance abuse in Canada by key stakeholders at all levels. For details, see CCSA Partnerships at www.ccsa.ca. □



► **Lianne Calvert** (far left), Director of Training and Workforce Development, and **Karen Cumberland** (far right), National Health, Education and Enforcement in Partnership (HEP) Program Policy Coordinator, with St. Lucia’s new National Youth Panel. The panel, which included young people with personal histories of substance use, is the first of its kind in St. Lucia and was influential in a decision to adopt youth as a national priority for action by the new TEAM Helen.

Resources and services just a click away at www.ccsa.ca

CCSA’s website is constantly evolving. Here are some features that *Action News* readers may find useful:

► You can now subscribe online to **Addiction News Daily**, a collection of news stories about addiction and the use or misuse of alcohol and illicit drugs, compiled by CCSA staff and e-mailed free to subscribers. You can visit the Addiction News Daily Web page any time to find links to the stories posted there every day. For details

on how to subscribe, the scope of subjects covered and the type of news sources searched, look for the link on the CCSA home page (www.ccsa.ca).

► CCSA has compiled links to nearly 50 **national and provincial/territorial drug strategies** from across Canada. From the home page, go to CCSA Partnerships, click on HEP and look for Drug Strategies under Resources on the right. A few municipal drug strategies can be found in

this list as well as a link to numerous International Drug Strategies.

► CCSA staff have prepared a series of **key questions to consider when seeking substance abuse treatment**. From the home page, click on Looking For Treatment?

► A monthly list of **CCSA Library New Acquisitions** is available by clicking on CCSA Publications on the home page and then clicking on the link in the top right corner. □



Save the date for...



November 25-28, 2007

Shaw Conference Centre, Edmonton, AB

www.issuesofsubstance.ca

Neil Boyd joins Research and Policy

Neil Boyd has joined CCSA's Research and Policy Division as an Associate. He will provide expert legal advice and opinion on issues relating to drug policy, legislation and research. Currently a Professor and Associate Director of the School of Criminology at Simon Fraser University, he was educated in psychology at the University of Western Ontario and in law at Osgoode Hall Law School. He is a former Director of the School of Criminology and is the author of five books, including *High Society: Legal and Illegal Drugs in Canada*; two textbooks, *The Social Dimensions of Law*, and *Canadian Law: An Introduction* (now in its 4th edition); and many academic articles. He is a frequent media commentator on subjects related to criminology and, especially,

drug law and policy and issues of criminal violence and homicide. He has written articles about drug markets, heroin treatment initiatives, injection drug use, responding to the threats posed by homicide offenders, and the link between drug use and homicide. He has recently completed a study of the Eron mortgage fraud, and is currently conducting a community impact study of the NAOMI heroin prescription trial in Vancouver. □



Events

For details of these and other events or to submit an event, go to **Calendar of Events** at www.ccsa.ca

➔ **LAST CHANCE: July 10-13—2006 National Summer Institute on Addictions.** Stanhope Beach Resort, PEI. The theme of this year's institute is "Working Together: Partnerships Along the Continuum of Service". Contact Lianne Calvert, CCSA, 613 235-4048, ext. 225; lcalvert@ccsa.ca, or go the CCSA website at www.ccsa.ca

July 20-23—4th Biennial International Conference on Personal Meaning (integration of mainstream addiction treatment programs with innovative approaches exploring the role of personal meaning and purpose). Vancouver. www.meaning.ca (wong@twu.ca) Tel: 604-552-0345; fax: 604-513-2150

Aug. 6-11—Healing Our Spirit Worldwide (a celebration of the health and healing of Indigenous Peoples around the world). Edmonton. www.hosw.com/cf_o.aspx (online e-mail: http://www.hosw.com/ab_ci.aspx) Tel: 1-780-447-4675 or 1-866-999-HOSW (1-866-999-4679); fax: 1-780-488-6717

Aug. 13-18—XVI International AIDS Conference. Toronto. www.aids2006.org/start.aspx (info@iasociety.org). Tel: +41-(0)22-7 100 800; fax: +41-(0)22-7 100 899

Sept. 1-5—23rd World Federation of Therapeutic Communities Conference. Sheraton New York. www.wftc.org/WFTC_conference/index_nyc.html (info@wftc.org)

Sept. 9—7th Annual Fetal Alcohol Canadian Expertise (FACE) Research Roundtable. Moncton, N.B. www.motherisk.org/JFAS/econtent_conferences.jsp Tel: (416) 813-8084; fax: (416) 813-7337

Oct. 15-18—Canadian Association of Drug Treatment Courts National Conference. Edmonton. neil.skinner@gov.ab.ca Tel: 780-427-6330; Fax: 780-427-2077

Oct. 22-24—Violence Against Women: Diversifying Social Responses. Montreal. www.criviff.qc.ca/colloque/accueil_ang.asp (conference@criviff.ulaval.ca)

Free solvent abuse posters offered

In an effort to raise awareness about solvent abuse, CCSA and the Youth Solvent Addiction Committee (YSAC) co-sponsored a poster contest directed at Canadian children and youth. Participants were invited to submit a poster design focusing on key prevention themes such as the harms of solvent use and how to say "no" to solvent use. The winning poster in the 10-13 age category is now available at no cost, although supplies are limited. The poster size is 17 x 22 in. (42.5 x 55.5 cm). If

you are interested in receiving a poster, please contact info@ccsa.ca indicating how many you would like (maximum of 10) and your mailing address. □

