

A Descriptive Examination of the Pre Treatment Illegal Activities of a Nationwide Sample of Adolescent Substance Abuse Clients

While much is known about the criminal behavior patterns of general population youth, seriously delinquent "street" adolescent substance abusers, poor urban youth, and incarcerated adolescents, little is known about the pre-treatment criminality of adolescent substance abuse treatment clients. This information is important because of substantial increases in adolescent substance abuse treatment admissions and because adolescents who use substances regularly are more likely than non-users to be criminally involved. This paper provides information, within and across treatment modality, on the lifetime patterns of substance abuse, criminal activity, and justice system involvement of 1,122 adolescents admitted to nine treatment programs throughout the United States. These data include: 1) age of substance use onset and types of substances used before treatment entry; 2) pre-treatment involvement with probation, incarceration, and arrest, including the most serious level of offense for which they had been arrested; 3) the most serious level of offense adolescents reported committing in the year before intake; and 4) the number of days during the 90 days prior to intake that adolescents were involved in substance use and illegal activities, including illegal activities for profit. Implications for treatment planning and future research are discussed.