

Girls abuse drugs at higher rates

REGION — Girls booked into Juvenile Hall in San Diego County abuse drugs at substantially higher rates than their male counterparts and face greater risk factors for delinquency, according to a new study released by the San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) Criminal Justice Research Division.

The study, “2012 Juvenile Arrestee Drug Use in the San Diego Region,” reveals alarming differences along gender lines:

— 64 percent of the girls interviewed for the study reported that their families had prior involvement with Child Protective Services, compared to 15 percent of the boys.

— 76 percent of the girls reported having run away from home, compared to 41 percent of the boys.

— Girls were significantly more likely than boys to

report using alcohol at an earlier age. The average age of first alcohol use is 11.8 for girls and 12.9 for boys.

— Girls were significantly more likely than boys to have tried methamphetamine (56percent vs. 21percent); ecstasy (60percent vs. 27percent); LSD (28percent vs. 7percent); and spice (76percent vs. 45percent).

— Girls also were significantly more likely than boys to have missed school due to drug use (50 percent vs. 16percent).

“These trends we are seeing speak to the importance of having gender-appropriate intervention and prevention programs to address the underlying needs of girls,” said SANDAG Director of Criminal Justice Research Cynthia Burke.

As part of the study, a total of 124 youth were interviewed at Juvenile Hall in March and September of

2012. Ninety-seven percent (97percent) or 120 of these youth provided a urine sample for drug testing purposes (95 males and 25 females).

The research includes results of urinalysis trends over time, as well as information pertaining to lifetime and recent self-reported drug use, perceived risk and availability of different drugs, and characteristics of the youth interviewed and how these factors may be related to drug use.

This bulletin, the first issue in a series presenting results from the 2012 Substance Abuse Monitoring (SAM) program, discusses drug use trends for juvenile arrestees, as well as predictors of current use and participation in risky behaviors.

The complete report, along with a Criminal Justice Fax on juvenile delinquent girls, is available at sandag.org/sam.

01) What is the first impression you get from this article?

02) What is the population from which this sample was drawn?

03) Looking at the sample what was the ratio of males to females?

04) Now consider the general population. Does it seem that young girls are really more likely to use drugs and end up in Juvenile Hall?