

*Ministry of Health and Ministry of National Security
In Collaboration with CICAD/OAS and the United States Embassy
Dissemination Meeting for Bahamas National Drug Assessments
Paul Farquharson Conference Centre
Royal Bahamas Police Force Headquarters, East Street
Nassau, New Providence
Commonwealth of The Bahamas
Thursday, July 20th, 2017, 9:00 a.m.*

Background

1. Bahamas Household Drug Survey

Through a Memorandum of Understanding agreed between the Inter-American Drug Abuse Control Commission (CICAD), Organization of American States (OAS) and the Ministry of Health, the Health Information and Research Unit undertook the work of implementing the Bahamas National Household Drug Survey. Funded by the OAS, this work was done in collaboration with the Ministry of Health; local stakeholder agencies; the National Anti-Drug Secretariat (NADS), an agency of the Ministry of National Security (which is also the point of contact for the OAS in this endeavour); the Department of Statistics; and the Bahamas National Drug Council.

The purpose of the survey was to determine the extent of drug use among persons 12 to 65 years of age in the population. While there have been assessments conducted on drug use among young people previously (2002, 2008 and 2011), a general population survey has not been conducted since 1991 (more than 20 years). Therefore, the launch of this current survey provided a valuable opportunity for us to understand the current status of drug use in the Bahamas.

Data collection was undertaken during the months of February to April, 2017 on the islands of New Providence, Grand Bahama, Exuma, Andros and Eleuthera (6 in total).

The Bahamas Household Drug Survey was approved by Cabinet and the joint Public Hospitals Authority/University of the West Indies Ethics Committee. Results will be used to help improve drug prevention, drug education programmes and drug treatment services for the general population of The Bahamas.

Immediately following the ceremony and presentations of the Dissemination Event, there will be a mini workshop for stakeholders to discuss policy implications and make recommendations related to all of the findings presented. It is the expectation that results from that session will be included in the final report. It will provide the basis for development of a plan of action with the end point being lives that are more and more protected from the harmful effects of drug use.

2. Rapid Situation Assessment on Drug Abuse and Related Factors

The Rapid Situation Assessment (RSA) was designed to complement the household survey. Led by Dr. Sandra Smith and other stakeholders, its purpose was to gather data and information on key drug-related issues, target populations, and other important relevant issues. This assessment was intended to support and enhance the development and implementation of related drug policies.

The method for the RSA was primarily qualitative, employing use of focus groups, key informant interviews, reviews of existing literature. These and other techniques are used to gather the data and information on which an analytical report is prepared.

Following a meeting with a number of key NADS stakeholders, a priority list with perceived, pressing issues was developed. At the outset there was a great interest in Youth as a target population as they are an important segment of the society.

3. Drug Treatment in the Bahamas

The Drug Treatment Data System was developed by CICAD to allow for standardized data collection on persons seeking treatment in all OAS member states, including The Bahamas. The system enables development of a profile of demographic characteristics; drug using behaviors; and treatment history. Once this data system is maintained over time, it will allow for the establishment of trends and identify some of the risk factors for problematic drug use. Data for 2016 were analyzed for The Bahamas.