Homelessness Among Drug-Using Adult Male Arrestees in Anchorage, 2000-2003

The Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) Program

This Research Overview presents information on the prevalence of homelessness among Anchorage arrestees. The data come from the Arrestee Drug Abuse Monitoring (ADAM) program, a national multi-site drug monitoring research project. ADAM was designed to collected detailed information on drug use behaviors among those booked into local jails and charged with violating at least one local or state criminal statute. Researchers at each site entered local jails for 14 consecutive days four times a year to conduct face-to-face interviews with arrestees. Anchorage was an ADAM site from 1999 to 2003.

The data presented here are limited in three important ways. First, they are limited to adults. Anchorage did not collect information from juvenile arrestees. Second, they are limited to males. (Data for female arrestees will be published in a future Research Overview). Third, the data presented here are limited to drug-using arrestees. As explained below, detailed housing information was only collected from arrestees who reported using illicit drugs within one year of arrest. Readers are encouraged to keep these sample specifications in mind when interpreting the data.

Calendaring

ADAM collected month-by-month housing information from arrestees using a retrospective 12-month calendar. Because of its focus on illicit drug use, calendar information was obtained only from those arrestees who reported any form of illicit drug use in the preceding year. Respondents were first asked to note significant life events that occurred during the 12-month preceding arrest – for example, birthdays,
To assess housing status, arrestees were asked where they lived “most of the time” (defined as 15 days or more) for each of the 12 months preceding arrest. Response choices were: (1) house, mobile home, or apartment; (2) residential hotel, rooming house, dormitory, group home, student housing, or military base; (3) hospital, treatment facility, or extended care facility; (4) shelter, or; (5) no fixed residence or homeless. Arrestees who answered (4) or (5) were coded as homeless for the analyses reported here.

In addition to being asked about their housing status, arrestees were also asked to provide information on any admissions to in-patient and out-patient substance abuse treatment, over-
night stays in mental hospitals, arrests, incarcerations in jail or prison, and alcohol and drug use. (These data will appear in Research Overview No. 7.)

Characteristics of Homelessness of Male Adult Drug-Using Arrestees

- Between 2000 and 2003 11.4% of arrestees who used illicit drugs in the year preceding arrest were homeless for at least one month.
- With the exception of two things—not having a high school degree and unemployment—the demographic characteristics of homeless arrestees population did not differ greatly from those who were domiciled.
- There was notable variability in the prevalence of homelessness among arrestees from quarter to quarter and year to year.
- The risk of homelessness increased markedly in the months preceding arrest.
- Most arrestees who experienced homelessness in the prior year were without permanent, stable housing for four months or less.
- A significant percentage of arrestees experienced chronic homelessness—10 months or more—in the past year. Fully eight percent were homeless for the entire year.

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