

A Publication from the Center for Substance Abuse Research

University of Maryland, College Park

*New CDEWS Study Finds Synthetic Cannabinoids (SC)  
in Adults and Juveniles in Washington, DC, Denver and Tampa*

The Community Drug Early Warning System (CDEWS) provides information about emerging drug use in local communities by sampling anonymous urine specimens that were previously collected by a criminal justice agency and tested for a limited panel of drugs and are ready to be discarded. CDEWS re-tests the specimens for an expanded panel of more than 75 drugs. The second CDEWS study (CDEWS-2) again collected specimens from adult parolees/probationers in Washington, DC and for the first time also analyzed specimens from juveniles in the criminal justice system. Other criminal justice sites included Denver, Colorado (adults), and Tampa, Florida (juveniles). Key findings from the CDEWS-2 report, released May 13<sup>th</sup> by the Office of National Drug Control Policy and available on their website, include:

- **The types of SC metabolites detected vary considerably by site.** While SC-positive specimens for Tampa juveniles contained only one metabolite (UR-144), specimens from adults and juveniles in DC and adults in Denver contained as many as 10 different metabolites.
- **DC juveniles may be using different formulations of SC than DC adults.** SC was detected in specimens from DC juveniles of all ages from 13-17. However, SC-positive specimens from DC juveniles contained a larger variety of SC metabolites than those from DC adults, including AB-PINACA (13% of SC-positive specimens).
- **SC metabolites detected have changed in the one year since the first study.** Two newly discovered SC metabolites (PB-22 and 5F-PB-22) not available for testing in the first CDEWS study in Washington, DC, were identified in 41% and 13%, respectively, of the SC-positive specimens from adult DC parolees/probationers in CDEWS-2.
- **SC metabolites are often found in specimens that test negative for drugs in standard CJS drug screens.** For example, a substantial number of the 21-30 year old male probationers from DC who had passed the standard local CJS screen tested positive for SC.

The CDEWS-2 results attest to the value of expanded testing of specimens already collected by local CJS drug testing programs and the difficulties inherent in keeping up with the constantly evolving nature of new psychoactive substances (NPS) such as SC. The results suggest that many adults and juveniles in local CJS drug testing programs likely turn to SC to avoid detection. It is also likely that programs using similar protocols to test urine specimens in other contexts, such as schools, workplaces, accident investigations, hospitals, and treatment programs, are missing SC use in their populations, leading to lost opportunities for diagnosis and intervention.

SOURCE: Adapted by CESAR from Wish, E.D., Billing, A.S., and Artigiani, E.E., *Community Drug Early Warning System: The CDEWS-2 Replication Study*, Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), 2015. Available online at [https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/policy-and-research/finalreport\\_4\\_8\\_15v3.pdf](https://www.whitehouse.gov/sites/default/files/ondcp/policy-and-research/finalreport_4_8_15v3.pdf). For more information, contact Dr. Eric D. Wish at [ewish@umd.edu](mailto:ewish@umd.edu). Also see the *CESAR FAX Synthetic Cannabinoid Series* at <http://www.cesar.umd.edu/cesar/pubs/SyntheticCannabinoidCESARFAX.pdf>.

**Want a CDEWS Study in Your Area?** If interested, please contact Dr. Eric D. Wish at [ewish@umd.edu](mailto:ewish@umd.edu).

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