NEW WEB SITE TRACKS SUBSTANCE ABUSE AMONG N.C. ADOLESCENTS

DURHAM, N.C. – A new Web site developed by a Duke University researcher can help people better understand the nature of substance abuse problems in every county in North Carolina and track trends over time.

The Web site, “Substance Abuse among North Carolina Adolescents,” http://substanceabuse.ssri.duke.edu/, includes publicly available data on substance abuse indicators. Elizabeth Gifford, a research scientist with Duke’s Center for Child and Family Policy, incorporated administrative data on arrests from the State Bureau of Investigation, details on emergency room visits from the N.C. Division of Public Health and self-reported measures from the Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance (YRBS) Survey and the Youth Tobacco Survey (YTS).

According to Gifford, the site can provide policymakers and practitioners at the state, county and local levels with useful information for planning prevention strategies, determining community service needs and evaluating the benefits of alternative programs and policies.

“The goal of this Web site was to simplify the process of assessing community need,” Gifford said. “Community groups seemed to be spending so much time trying to understand what their needs were around substance use. Alternatively, if the information is more readily available, communities can dedicate their time to having ‘the next conversation’ -- that is, what are the top priorities and strategies for serving their community.

“I encourage everyone, from police officers, to teachers, parents and individual taxpayers, to explore the Web site and to use the information there to inform their work and their decision-making.”


“I hope that the five different ways to view data encourage folks to play around with the numbers,” Gifford said. “I hope it provokes a lot of questions.”

The Web site was produced in partnership with The University of North Carolina at Greensboro’s Center for Youth, Family, and Community Partnerships and the North Carolina Division of Mental Health, Developmental Disabilities, and Substance Abuse Services. It was funded by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Center for Substance Abuse Treatment, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services.

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The Center for Child and Family Policy, which is affiliated with the Social Science Research Institute and the Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy at Duke, bridges the gap between research and public policy to improve the lives of children and families. For more information on the center, visit <http://www.childandfamilypolicy.duke.edu>.

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