

# Data Spotlight

Drug Abuse Warning Network

December 20, 2011

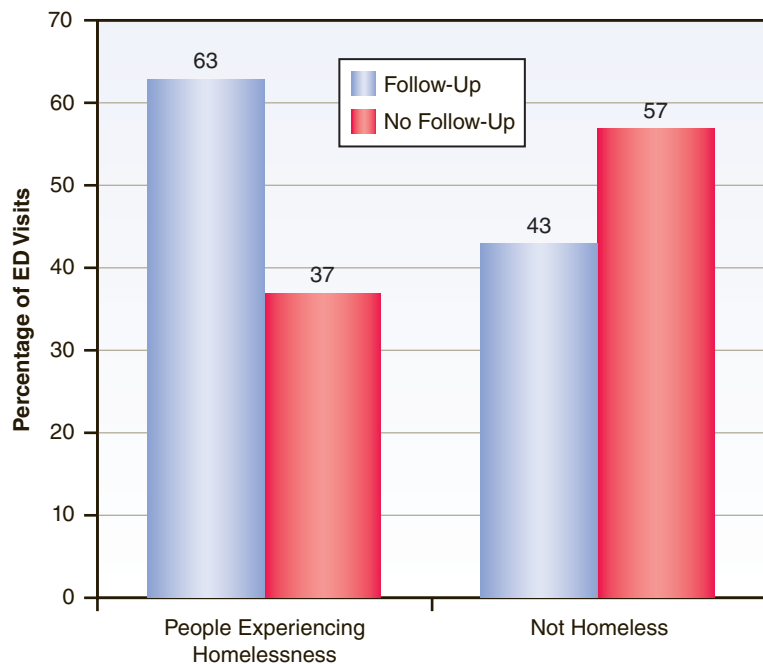
## Drug-Related Emergency Department Visits and the Follow-Up Care of Patients Experiencing Homelessness

Emergency departments (EDs) serve as a critical gateway for persons experiencing homelessness to access care for both acute and chronic physical and mental illness. Adults experiencing homelessness who have substance-related problems are markedly more likely than those who are not homeless to obtain medical care through costly ED services.<sup>1</sup> In 2009 and 2010, almost two thirds (63 percent) of the 106,495 drug-related ED visits by adult patients experiencing homelessness resulted in follow-up care at the ED hospital or other health facility or referral to a substance abuse treatment program (Figure). In contrast, 43 percent of ED visits by adults who were not homeless resulted in follow-up care.

While EDs provide first-line emergency treatment and referral to follow-up care, both patients and staff might be better served through enhanced outreach and engagement strategies targeted at the at-risk homeless population. Service providers, prevention specialists, health care providers, and others interested in learning more about the resources that SAMHSA offers will find a variety of materials and information at <http://homeless.samhsa.gov/>.

<sup>1</sup> Machlin, S., & Chowdhury, S. (2011, March). *Expenses and characteristics of physician visits in different ambulatory care settings, 2008* (Statistical Brief #318). Rockville, MD: Agency for Healthcare Research and Quality. [Available at [http://www.meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/data\\_files/publications/st318/stat318.pdf](http://www.meps.ahrq.gov/mepsweb/data_files/publications/st318/stat318.pdf)].

**Follow-Up after Drug-Related ED Visits, by Homeless Status of Patient: 2009 to 2010**



Source: The Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN) is a public health surveillance system that monitors drug-related hospital emergency department visits and drug-related deaths to track the impact of drug use, misuse, and abuse in the United States.

The **Data Spotlight** may be copied without permission. Citation of the source is appreciated. Find this report and those on similar topics online at <http://www.samhsa.gov/data/>.

