

The DASIS Report

December 12, 2003

The National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services (N-SSATS)

The National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services (N-SSATS) is designed to collect

data on the location, characteristics, and utilization of services at alcohol and drug abuse treatment facilities¹ (both public and private) throughout the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and other U.S. jurisdictions.²

In Brief

- N-SSATS is a point-prevalence survey conducted annually with a reference date of the last weekday in March
- N-SSATS is designed to collect data on the location, characteristics, and utilization of services at alcohol and drug abuse treatment facilities (both public and private) throughout the 50 States, the District of Columbia, and other U.S. jurisdictions
- The survey response rate is typically above 95 percent

N-SSATS is part of the Drug and Alcohol Services Information System (DASIS), a cooperative program between the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and State substance abuse agencies to collect data on substance abuse services. The core of DASIS is the Inventory of Substance Abuse Treatment Services (I-SATS), a continuously updated, comprehensive listing of all known substance abuse treatment facilities in the United States. N-SSATS is an annual survey of all facilities in I-SATS. Prior to 2000, N-SSATS was known as the Uniform Facility Data Set (UFDS).

Survey Coverage

N-SSATS is designed to collect data from each physical location where treatment services are provided. Accordingly, a “facility” is defined as the point of delivery of substance abuse treatment services (i.e., physical location). Treatment facilities that are licensed, certified, or otherwise approved by the State substance abuse agency to provide substance abuse treatment make up the largest group of facilities. The survey also includes programs operated by Federal agencies—the Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), the Department of Defense, and the Indian Health Service. Together, these facilities represent about 80 percent of the total. The remaining facilities included in N-SSATS are those that are not licensed or certified through the State substance abuse agencies or Federal agencies. These facilities are usually hospital-based or private-for-profit facilities. N-SSATS does not include treatment programs in jails or prisons.

Each year new facilities are added to the I-SATS by State agencies or when they are identified by examination of databases such as the one maintained by the American Hospital Association. Similarly, on an annual basis, some facilities are found to be ineligible for the survey. For example, in 2002, of the 18,204 facilities in I-SATS, 2,745 (15 percent) were found to be ineligible for the survey because they had closed or were not providing substance abuse treatment on March 29, 2002.

Survey Content

N-SSATS collects information on specific characteristics of the facility, the number of clients in treatment on a given day, and general information such as access to the Internet. In 2002, the survey contained 37 questions, as summarized in Table 1.

Data Collection

N-SSATS is a point-prevalence survey³ conducted annually with a reference date of the last weekday in March (e.g., March 31, 2004). In the past, the survey was conducted exclusively by mail with a follow-up of non-respondents by telephone. In 2000, a web-based version of the survey was made available through the Internet as an alternative way for facilities to respond.

Generally, the facility response rates have been about 95 percent. Although the item response rate generally exceeds 99 percent in N-SSATS, missing responses for some variables have to be imputed.⁴ For example, in 2002, 232 facilities were missing client count values for one or more types of service (i.e., hospital inpatient detoxification, hospital inpatient rehabilitation, residential detoxification, etc.). A facility was given an imputed value for the number of clients in a service type if it reported that it provided the service but the client count was missing or unknown.

Uses of Survey Data

N-SSATS data support a variety of analytic and other uses including:

- Assessment of the nature and extent of services provided in treatment facilities;

- Analysis of treatment services trends and comparative analyses for the nation, regions, and States;
- An update to the Inventory of Substance Abuse Treatment Services (I-SATS);
- Generation of the National Directory of Drug and Alcohol Abuse Treatment Programs. This list is then used to update SAMHSA’s Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator, an on-line, searchable database of these facilities (<http://findtreatment.samhsa.gov>).

Data Considerations and Limitations

Certain procedural considerations and data limitations must be taken into account when interpreting data from N-SSATS.

N-SSATS is a voluntary survey. Facilities are not required by SAMHSA or the State substance abuse agencies to respond. Although no penalty is associated with non-response, facilities that do not respond are not included in the Substance Abuse Treatment Facility Locator.

N-SSATS is designed to collect data from each physical location where treatment services are provided. Because State administrative systems differ, there are some variations in how facilities with more than one geographic location report to N-SSATS.

N-SSATS is a point-prevalence survey. It provides a “snapshot” of substance abuse treatment facilities and clients on a typical day. Thus, the number of clients in treatment reported for a single day does not represent an annual total nor does

it necessarily represent the full capacity of a facility to deliver substance abuse treatment services.

Routine Reports and Data Availability

The annual N-SSATS report⁵ contains tables, graphs and charts, and a narrative discussing trends and topics of special interest.

The *DASIS Report*, published approximately twice a month, highlights findings from N-SSATS and other DASIS datasets.

All reports are posted on-line on the SAMHSA website (<http://www.samhsa.gov>). Printed copies are available through the National Clearinghouse for Drug and Alcohol Information (NCADI) and online through <http://www.health.org>.⁶

N-SSATS public use files for 1997-2002 are available through the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Data Archive (SAMHDA) and the archive's on-line data analysis system (<http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/SAMHDA>).⁷

End Notes

¹ Entities responding to N-SSATS are referred to as "facilities." A facility may be a program-level, clinic-level, or multi-site respondent.

² The jurisdictions include the territories of American Samoa and Guam, the Federated States of Micronesia, the Republic of Palau, the Commonwealth of Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands of the United States.

³ A point-prevalence survey enumerates people, services, or characteristics that exist at a particular point in time.

⁴ Imputation is the process of assigning a plausible value to a missing data point.

⁵ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, Office of Applied Studies (2003). *National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services (N-SSATS): 2002. Data on Substance Abuse Treatment Facilities*, DASIS Series: S-19, DHHS Publication No. (SMA) 03-3777, Rockville, MD: Author.

⁶ Write or call NCADI at:
NCADI
P.O. Box 2345
Rockville, MD 20847-2345
(301) 468-2600, 1-800-729-6686, or
(TDD) 1-800-487-4889

⁷ The archive is supported by the Office of Applied Studies at SAMHSA and based at the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research (ICPSR) through a subcontract with the National Opinion Research Center (NORC) at the University of Chicago.

Table 1. N-SSATS Data Items: 2002

- Facility information	Location; Hotline; Intake number; Website; Internet access
- Facility ownership	Private for-profit; Private non-profit; State government, local, county, or community government; Tribal government; Federal government (Dept. of Veterans Affairs; Dept. of Defense; Indian Health Service; Other)
- Primary focus	Substance abuse treatment services; Mental health services; General health care; Mix of mental health and substance abuse treatment services; Other
- Services offered	Assessment services; Substance abuse therapy and counseling; Pharmacotherapies, Testing; Transitional services; Other services
- Operation of an Opioid Treatment (methadone) Program	
- Special programs or groups	Adolescents; Clients with co-occurring mental health and substance abuse disorders; Persons with HIV/AIDS; Gays and lesbians; Seniors/older adults; Pregnant/postpartum women; Other groups for women only; Groups for men only; DUI/DWI or other drunk driver offenders; Criminal justice clients other than DUI/DWI clients
- Languages in which treatment is provided	
- Types of services	Hospital inpatient (Detoxification; Rehabilitation); Non-hospital residential (Detoxification; Rehabilitation); Outpatient (Ambulatory detoxification; Regular outpatient treatment; Intensive outpatient treatment; Day treatment/partial hospitalization program)
- Types of payment accepted	Cash or self-payment; Medicare; Medicaid; State-financed health insurance plan other than Medicaid; Federal military insurance; Private health insurance; Other
- Sliding fee scale or other type of payment assistance	
- Receipt of federal, state, county, or local government funds	
- Agreements or contracts with managed care organizations	
- Facility licensure, approval, certification, or accreditation	
- One-day client census by service type	Totals Clients receiving methadone or LAAM Clients under age 18 Number of hospital or residential beds designated specifically for substance abuse treatment clients Number of admissions in the past year
- Type of substance abuse problem: alcohol only, drug only, both alcohol and drug	

The Drug and Alcohol Services Information System (DASIS) is an integrated data system maintained by the Office of Applied Studies, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA). One component of DASIS is the National Survey of Substance Abuse Treatment Services (N-SSATS), an annual survey of all facilities in the United States, both public and private, that provide substance abuse treatment.

The *DASIS Report* is prepared by the Office of Applied Studies, SAMHSA; Synectics for Management Decisions, Inc., Arlington, Virginia; and RTI, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina.

Access the latest N-SSATS reports at: <http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/dasis.htm>
Access the latest N-SSATS public use files at: <http://www.samhsa.gov/oas/SAMHDA.htm>
Other substance abuse reports are available at: <http://www.DrugAbuseStatistics.samhsa.gov>



U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration
Office of Applied Studies
www.samhsa.gov