

## About the Center for Substance Abuse Research (CESAR)

In 1989, the Governor's Drug and Alcohol Abuse Commission recommended the creation of [CESAR](#), a multi-disciplinary research center at the [University of Maryland, College Park](#). CESAR began its first studies of the State's drug and alcohol problems in 1990. Since that time, it has grown into a premier research center with partnerships and collaborations with many federal, state, and local agencies across the country. For more than two decades, CESAR has monitored shifts in the use and availability of drugs such as heroin, ecstasy, methamphetamine, prescription opioids, synthetic cannabinoids, and other synthetic drugs. The staff's cutting edge research and epidemiological projects have made Maryland a national leader in identifying and responding to emerging drug use trends, including heroin in the late 90s and ecstasy and other club drugs in the early 2000s. Staff have conducted research with adult and juvenile criminal justice populations, substance abuse treatment clients, substance abuse experts, college students, and the general population. The levels of support CESAR has provided ranged from consultation to full implementation. The most prominent examples of these efforts are:

- **Maryland Drug Early Warning System (DEWS)** – coordinated statewide heroin and ecstasy action plans
- **State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup (SEOW)** – identified state prevention priorities
- **Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF SIG)** – completed state needs assessment and strategic plan
- **Adult Offender Population Urinalysis Study (OPUS)** – expanded urine testing to detect emerging drugs
- **Treatment Outcomes Studies** – identified elements of successful programs
- **Drug Use Clearinghouse** – provides access to more than 26,000 key word coded documents
- **[CESAR FAX](#)** – highlights current data and research results; sent weekly to more than 6,000 people

In recent years, CESAR staff have moved beyond collecting and disseminating data and information to building new technologies to connect Marylanders to the services they need. In addition, we have adapted the skills and tools developed in Maryland to address new drug use trends nationwide.

- **[Maryland Community Services Locator \(MDCSL\)](#)**  
The Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention (GOCCP) funded CESAR to develop a centralized system to help Marylanders find the resources they need. MDCSL links residents and incarcerated offenders to more than 9,000 individual programs in two dozen service categories. A searchable user-friendly database provides detailed program information, complete contact information, driving directions, and maps. MDCSL is one of only three web sites provided to incarcerated offenders to help them develop re-entry plans.
- **[Community Drug Early Warning System \(CDEWS\)](#)**  
The Executive Office of the President Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) identified the need for a community early warning and monitoring system to track local substance use and problem indicators and funded CESAR to develop CDEWS. Launched in 2013, CDEWS is now in its third collection phase. It was designed to provide rapid information about emerging drug use in local communities by sampling anonymous urine specimens already collected, tested, and ready to be discarded. CDEWS retests the specimens for an expanded panel of more than 75 drugs, including 12 synthetic cannabinoid metabolites. CDEWS staff work closely with leading toxicologists to identify and test for synthetic cannabinoids, as those tests become available.
- **[National Drug Early Warning System \(NDEWS\)](#)**  
In 2014, the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA) funded CESAR to develop a nationwide public health surveillance system. NDEWS monitors emerging drug use trends to enable health experts, researchers, and concerned citizens across the country to respond quickly to potential outbreaks of illicit drugs such as heroin and to identify increased use of designer synthetic compounds. CESAR recently launched the NDEWS Network, a virtual community of more than 500 scientists, government officials, public health experts, law enforcement representatives, and others for sharing information and assisting with local research. Innovative methods being developed for information collection include social media (e.g., Twitter) and news scans.