

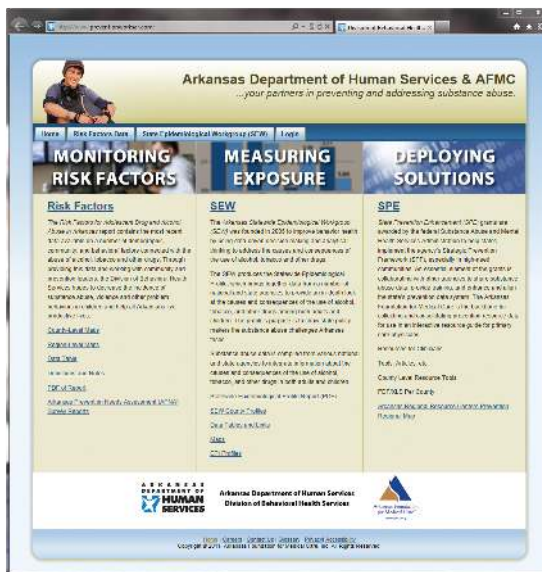
Substance Abuse Assessment: Exchanging and Integrating Data is Paramount

The Arkansas State Epidemiological Outcomes Workgroup (AR-SEOW) has fulfilled its purpose of providing a comprehensive picture of substance abuse challenges in Arkansas. As a managing, analytic and advisory agent of AR-SEOW, the Arkansas Foundation for Medical Care has carefully identified data sources and meticulously collected and integrated data on substance abuse. In turn, analytics staff members have developed an information infrastructure that facilitates the exchange of knowledge and advances policy-making agencies' communication and collaboration into continuous assessment, planning and monitoring of substance abuse prevention practices.

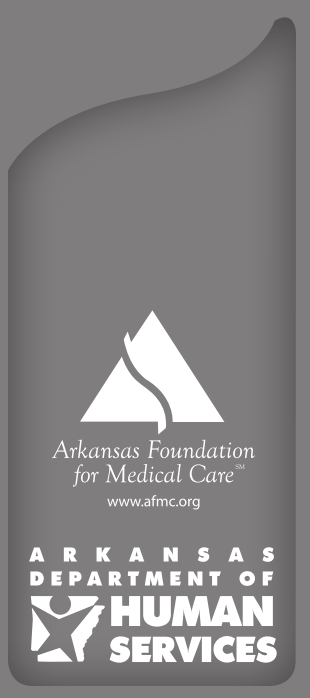
The information infrastructure is based on a web portal, www.preventionworksar.com, that houses tables, figures, interactive maps, epidemiological information tools, and annual statewide and county epidemiological profiles. The main page of the website includes a brief description of the Arkansas State Epidemiological Workgroup, which is focused on measuring exposure (Figure 1). Additional resources for monitoring risk factors (the *Risk Factors for Adolescent Drug and Alcohol Abuse in Arkansas* report) and deploying solutions are also available on the web portal. These links are also accessible via an interactive menu at the top of the page. The most comprehensive AR-SEOW resource available in this portal is the Epidemiological State Profile, which provides a detailed analysis of the consumption and consequences of substance use throughout the state of Arkansas.

The SEOW link leads to a page containing more detailed information about the workgroup, such as its mission, history and goals. The Data Tables page houses a directory of available data tables and links to other websites that function as primary informational resources. Data has been collected over the span of several years and has been organized where available at two geographical levels: county and statewide. These tables organize

FIGURE 1.



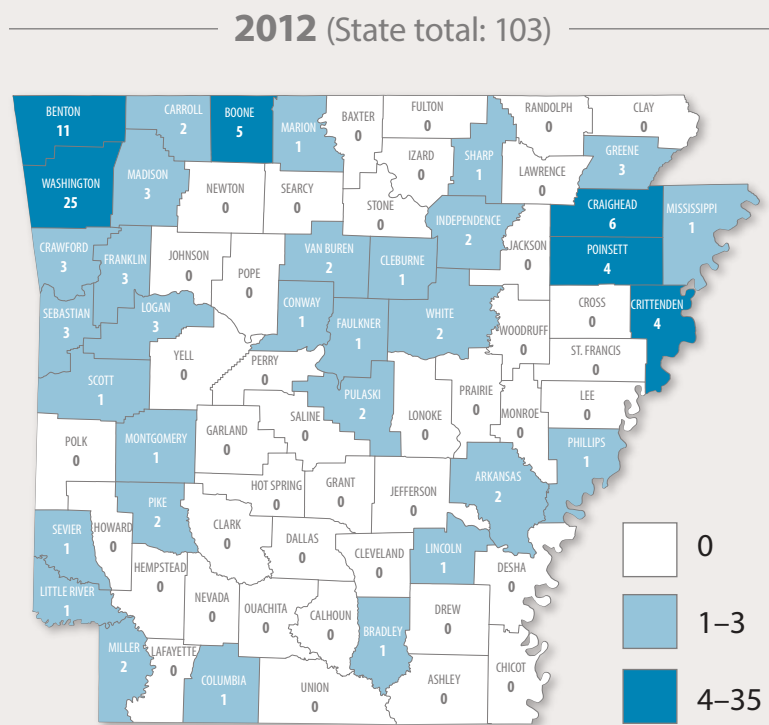
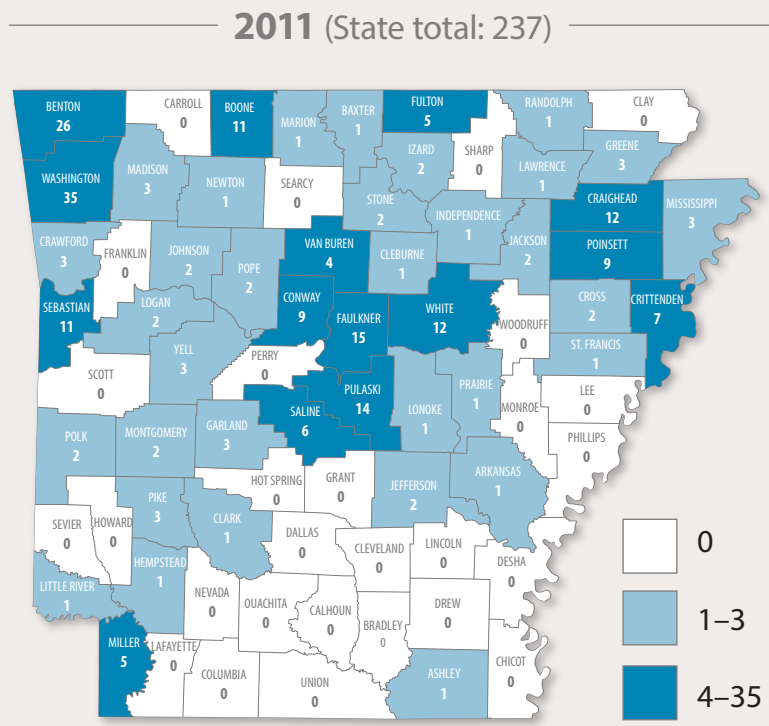
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information about the various substances that are abused, such as tobacco, alcohol and other drugs, as well as how they are abused. The tables describe not only substance abuse and consumption, but also include measures of various consequences of consumption as well as risk factors, which include poor mental health indicators. For instance, alcohol consumption can be examined from the number of beer permits available to the geographical distribution of wet and dry counties as well as the number of adult arrests for DUI and high school alcohol infractions. Statistics such as the number of pregnant women in alcohol treatment facilities, the number of hospital discharges due to alcohol abuse and the number of births to women who used alcohol during pregnancy allow researchers to study the serious consequences of alcohol consumption and abuse.

Two additional links direct users to unique county-level evidence. The first link is an interactive map of the state of Arkansas that allows the user to access county-level epidemiological profiles by selecting a specific county of interest. Each county profile contains general demographics of the population as well as relevant risk, consumption and consequence data. The second map hyperlink leads to a repository of maps of the state of Arkansas depicting the county-level geographical distribution of the consumption of various substances and their consequences. Maps showing the distribution of methamphetamine (meth) lab seizures over the years 2011 and 2012 seem to indicate that the production of meth has

FIGURE 2. Methamphetamine lab seizures, 2011 and 2012



subsided, as the number of statewide lab seizures declined from 237 to 103. Interestingly, the variation in pattern seems constant over these two years, with most of the seizures corresponding to the same counties of higher population density; however, the problem seems to be more acute in the northwestern counties of Benton, Boone, Carroll, Crawford, Sebastian and Washington (Figure 2).

A number of informational tools geared towards the public and practitioners have been published in PDF format via this site. These tools focus on specific substances and how their consumption and abuse could be prevented. One of the epidemiological informational tools highlights how prevalent prescription drug abuse has become among teenagers — even more so in Arkansas, which was ranked as having the worst teen prescription pain reliever abuse problem in the nation in 2007. However, that year may be considered a turning point, as this epidemiological informational tool describes a steady decline in prescription drug abuse by students over the subsequent three years. Additionally, it provides parents and community members with a series of effective steps to prevent prescription drug abuse by their children. Additional performance profiles focus on the use of smokeless tobacco products and inhalant abuse. Both of these tools highlight the current extent of substance abuse by teenagers, ways to help parents identify substance abuse, and steps they can take to prevent and deal with abuse by adolescents. Informational tools can be accessed through the EPI Profiles link within the State Epidemiological Workgroup (SEOW) tab and are readily available to download and print.

This effort was originally funded through the Strategic Prevention Framework State Incentive Grant (SPF SIG) from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's Center for Substance Abuse Prevention (SAMHAS/CSAP), whose purpose is to provide financial and technical assistance to community coalitions in developing effective substance abuse prevention programs. The AR-SEOW is funded through the Substance Abuse Prevention and Treatment Block Grant, and it is housed in the Arkansas Department of Human Services' Division of Behavioral Health Services.

For the first time, providers and community coalition members throughout Arkansas have access to the AR-SEOW's comprehensive web-based resources for substance use initiatives. Through integration of statistics, maps and additional tools, the AR-SEOW website allows both providers and community members to make data-driven decisions in order to assess, plan and monitor substance use among the population residing in their community. In keeping with AFMC's mission of promoting excellence in health and health care through education and evaluation, we encourage policy makers, providers, researchers and the community in general to visit the SEOW section of our web portal to help them better understand the current conditions of substance abuse facing Arkansans.