

Data Analytics to Improve Behavioral Health



Westat has significant expertise in collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data to improve behavioral health-related outcomes, including those for opioid and other substance use disorder prevention and treatment. By working with a variety of Federal-, state-, and community-level data sources, we enhance the ability of our clients to assess needs, develop and evaluate programs and policies, and allocate resources.



Westat's skills and expertise bring data-driven decisionmaking to Federal, state, and local government agencies, as well as to universities, nonprofits, associations, and foundations. We have significant expertise in merging data from multiple sources, translating them into actionable recommendations, and building user-friendly data systems and dashboards for use in management and dissemination. We have analyzed data on substance-related mortality, hospitalizations, claims, treatment admissions, crimes, drug seizures, prescribing, as well as on a number of environmental, social, and individual risk and protective factors. Using these analyses, we generate products to address client and community needs.

Steps for a comprehensive analysis



Develop analytic plan and identify, request, and import required data



Review data quality to address issues, improve systems



Merge data and standardize files across multiple data sources



Analyze data to generate incidence, prevalence, subgroup estimates, and trends, and identify risk factors



Identify high-need subgroups and hot spots



Disseminate findings through interactive data dashboards



Produce fact sheets, issue briefs, epidemiologic profiles, and presentations

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SELECTED PROJECTS

Florida Opioid Data and Research Project

Westat worked with GuideWell on an in-depth assessment of the opioid crisis in Florida. Using national, state (Florida), and local (Florida regions and counties) data, we provided analyses on opioid-related consequences, prescribing and consumption patterns, and risk and protective factors to identify high-risk subpopulations, geographic hot spots, and emerging trends. We shared findings with GuideWell and its clients in a user-friendly report, chartbook, and a summary presentation.

Center for the Application of Prevention Technologies (CAPT) Epidemiology Support

Westat provided training and technical assistance to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA's) prevention grantees to use in substance abuse prevention planning and decisionmaking. Westat created the Substance Abuse Prevention Planning and Epidemiology Tool (SAPPET), a unique, one-stop shop data system that provides access to key substance-related consequences, consumption patterns, and risk and protective factors at state and local levels. SAPPET provides data in the form of interactive graphs, crosstabs, and dashboards that users can customize.

Drug Abuse Warning Network (DAWN)

Westat has re-established SAMHSA's DAWN, a nationwide public health surveillance system to improve emergency department data from a sample of hospitals, and with a focus on identifying sentinel drug events. We are designing the surveillance reporting system and data collection infrastructure, recruiting hospitals, collecting data, providing quality assurance/control of data, and developing a public data dissemination platform.

Health Care Professional Survey of Prescription Drug Promotion II

This survey assesses health care providers' opinions about professional promotion of prescription drugs and its influence on prescribing practices. Westat is conducting the web survey with a nationally representative sample of primary care physicians, specialists, nurse practitioners, and physician assistants who are identified and recruited using WebMD's network of Medscape subscribers. The research plan includes cognitive testing of survey questions, a pretest, and a main survey. Westat is also conducting background research and a literature review, revising and programming the questionnaire, and developing and implementing an analysis plan.

Analytic Support Center

For SAMHSA, this work assisted the Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality (CBHSQ) in supporting substantive and methodologic analyses and data for stakeholders, providing background materials, and obtaining expert opinion in furthering the knowledge and understanding of behavioral health problems and consequences throughout the country. Westat support included analytic, statistical, and methodologic support services, technical writing, and evaluation.

Health System Performance Scorecard

Westat provides data collection, management, and analytic support for the Commonwealth Fund Health System Scorecard (<http://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/health-system-scorecards>), a series of performance benchmarks and improvement targets for communities, states, and the nation.

Performance data are publicly reported for 40+ measures of health care access, quality of care, outcomes, efficiency of care, and income-based health disparities. State scorecards measure health system performance in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. Local scorecards assess performance in local markets for health care.

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