



# Drug Evaluation Network System

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## DENS Launches Newsletter Amid New Expansion Phase

*Newsletter to be sent to all sites quarterly*

Jennifer M. Bower  
Recruitment and User Support Coordinator

The DENS staff is pleased to announce the newest expansion of the ongoing Drug Evaluation Network System project. In late 2002, DENS received funding from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) to set up 30 programs in three cities: Los Angeles, CA, Chicago, IL, and New York, NY. DENS will be recruiting and training these urban programs throughout the summer.



DENS is expanding into programs located in Los Angeles, CA, Chicago, IL, and New York, NY.

To efficiently communicate to our programs- new and experienced, we have launched a newsletter, which will be sent to programs every quarter. This newsletter will focus on DENS news, coding tips, substance abuse news, and answers to your common support questions. Please call the DENS Helpline with any questions or suggestions at 1-877-TRI-DENS. ❖

## New "Additional Questions" Activated; Quarterly Reports Sent

*Questions focus on client homelessness and religion*

Leslie Blue and Amy Camilleri  
Quality Assurance Coordinators

At the beginning of April, DENS activated new "additional questions" that were added to the DENS ASI software. In an effort to collect information on new areas of interest, we have added additional questions in the following sections of the ASI: General Information, Additional Drug Grid, Drug section, Legal section, Family/Social Section, and Psychiatric Section. These questions address religion, additional drug use, OxyContin<sup>®</sup> use, mandated treatment by the criminal justice system, homelessness, and Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), respectively.

All sites should have been contacted with information and instructions regarding these "additional questions". If you have any questions or concerns regarding the "additional questions," please contact your site coordinator, toll-free at 1-877-TRI-DENS.

## Quarterly Reports – Second Quarter, 2003

Quarterly reports were also sent this month. These reports summarize data collected upto the second quarter of 2003, January through June. Sites that have sent at least 50 new cases to DENS will receive a quarterly report.

In addition, DENS is currently developing a new version of the quarterly reports. This new version will be available later this year. The new reports will be easier to read and in a format that is more succinct in providing useful clinical information. ❖

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# ASI Coding Tips

*Tips on completing more accurate ASI's*

Leslie Blue and Amy Camilleri  
Quality Assurance Coordinators

After your program's data is sent to DENS, it undergoes a battery of tests to help identify miscodes. In turn, we will use this newsletter to help you complete accurate ASI's. Here are the top 10 potential coding issues (and remedies) for the data collected between April and June 2003:

**1. Clinician reports client's misrepresentation of responses and/or an inability to understand ASI Items.**

Question #s: M10 & M11, L31 & L32, E23 & E24, D34 & D35, F37 & F38, P22 & P23

**Remedy:** Make sure you have definitive proof (e.g. a criminal record or toxicology results) that the client misrepresented the majority of the section in order to code these items as "yes". This question is not intended to flag a client in denial and consequently, if you cannot prove that the client is not being honest, code as "no".

**2. Client reports receiving money from pensions in the employment section but reports getting no medical or psychiatric pension in other ASI sections.**

Question #s: E15, M5 & P3

**Remedy:** Cross-check the client's responses (if they are still present), and re-code the ASI to facilitate agreement among sections.

**3. Client is paid for working all 30 of the past 30 days.**

Question #: E11

**Remedy:** Probe to make sure the client worked Monday-Friday, in addition to weekends. Most "full-time" jobs are worked on weekdays, in which case the correct E11 code would be '20.' Try to code the actual number of days worked in the past 30.

**4. Lifetime usage of substances before age 10.**

Question #s: D1-D13

**Remedy:** Probe further to make sure that the client

was using regularly (3x per week or more) for at least 6 months prior to age 10 in order to count as one year of regular use.

**5. Client reports more than 17 drug treatment episodes in his/her lifetime.**

Question #s: D20

**Remedy** Only include drug-related treatment episodes. Include Detox, halfway houses, in/outpatient treatment, & NA (if 3 or more meetings in one month). Exclude psychiatric and medical treatments. Also, if a client moves straight from inpatient to outpatient treatment, without any breaks, this is coded as ONE treatment episode.

**6. Clinician codes the "class" field as a follow-up interview rather than an intake.**

Question #: G8

**Remedy:** Most ASI's done for the DENS study will be coded as "Intake". ASI's done on or near admission are intakes even if the client has been in the treatment program before. Follow-up ASI's are generally completed by interviewers completing follow-up studies.

**7. Client reports receiving less than 4 years of formal education.**

Question #: E1a

**Remedy:** Include traditional schooling and structured home-based schooling. GED = 12, Bachelors degree = 16 years, Masters = 18 years, Doctorate = 22 years, etc.

**8. Client reports being in drug detox more times than s/he reports being in drug treatment.**

Question #s: D22 & D20

**Remedy:** D20 asks the number of times the client has been treated for drug abuse in their lifetime. D22 asks the client to recall how many of those drug treatments (as stated in D20) were detox **only**. Note that this question is asking how many were detox only, not how many **INCLUDED** detox. If client reports that they have never been treated for drug abuse, then D22 = 0. Consequently, D22 can never be higher than D20.

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**9. Client reports spending more than \$875 on alcohol in the past 30 days.**

Question #: D23

**Remedy:** Count only actual money spent (cash out of pocket) on alcohol in the past 30 days. The intent of the question is to ascertain the financial burden caused by alcohol use.

**10. Client reports receiving no money from pensions in the employment section but reports getting medical or psychiatric pension in other ASI sections.**

Question #s: E15, M5a, P3

**Remedy:** Cross-check the client's responses (if they are still present), and re-code the ASI to facilitate agreement among sections. If M5a or P3 > 0, then E15 must be great than zero.

## On the Road...

*Training in Southern California*

Miriam Ackerman  
Site Specialist



*At the end of the first day of training, staff at a Southern California outpatient program work on a practice ASI using their new DENS Software and Laptop (above) and complete the ASI competency quiz (right). Thank you for allowing us to include you in our newsletter! ❖*

## Training Tips

*Making the most of DENS training*

Anne McClintock  
Training Coordinator

### DENS ASI Continuing Education Credits

Upon successful completion of the DENS ASI competency measures, each training participant will be mailed a Certificate of Completion. This certificate may be submitted to your state or other accrediting agency for certified addictions counselor, continuing medical education, or continuing education credit.

### Make use of Your DENS Training Materials

Are you making the most of the training materials you received during training? Here are some helpful tools and information available at your fingertips:

- Fast Answers Manual (blue cover)- Quick and easy reference for software "how to?" questions. Includes step-by-step instructions for all major software functions. Keep the Fast Answers Manual in an easy to reach place by your computer.
- On-line Help Manual - In depth instructions for each question on the ASI. The manual also provides intent/key points, suggested interviewing techniques, additional probes, coding issues, and crosscheck items. This information is also available in the software by pressing the F1 key. ❖



## Laptop Safety

*Keep your laptop safe and running!*

Jennifer M. Bower  
Recruitment and User Support Coordinator

As DENS delivers computers across the country, programs are concerned with laptop safety. Here are some suggestions for keeping your laptop safe.

1. One person should take responsibility for the laptop and monitor its use. If this person is away on vacation or leaves the program, it is extremely important to designate a new "keeper."
2. At night, the laptop should be placed in a secure location, such as a locked desk. If you lock your office, we suggest still keeping the laptop in an out-of-sight location within the room.
3. To secure a laptop to a desk, laptop locks can be purchased at an office supply or computer store in your area.
4. Remember to back up your data on a regular basis AND store it in a separate place from the laptop. If you lose your laptop, you will not lose your data.
5. If your laptop is stolen, immediately call the police and fill out a police report. Notify DENS of the situation, and send a copy of the police report. ❖

## Websites and Freebies

*Free Resources*

Jennifer M. Bower  
Recruitment and User Support Coordinator

In each newsletter, we will list interesting drug and alcohol related websites and resources.

- A free brochure from the National Association of Drug Diversion Investigators (NADDI) depicting commonly abused prescription drugs:  
<http://www.naddi.org/brochure.asp>
- Download or print a comprehensive listing of drug street terms- from the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP):  
[http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/pdf/street\\_terms.pdf](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/pdf/street_terms.pdf)
- American University Drug Court News:  
<http://www.american.edu/justice/news.html>
- Publications related to drug use and crime- from the National Criminal Justice Reference Service (NCJRS):  
<http://virlib.ncjrs.org/DrugsAndCrime.asp>
- A wealth of substance abuse information- SAMSHA's Publications Clearinghouse:  
<http://store.health.org/> ❖

## Your Frequently Asked Questions

*Your top support questions of the month*

Sam Rikoon  
Site Specialist

**Q:** When I attempt to send my data to TRI via modem, I get an error that reads, "DENS bridge already running." What's wrong?

**A:** Your modem is already connected to TRI. To disconnect, right click on the icon toward the bottom right corner of your screen that looks like two little computers (next to the clock). Then, left click "Disconnect." This will close the current connection and allow you to establish a new one when you click on "Send data to TRI" from within the DENS Suite.

**Q:** My comments disappeared when I went on to the next question! What happened to them?!?

**A:** The comments box in the software refreshes itself with each new item you click on, so that you can enter a new comment for every question in the ASI. Don't worry! Your comments have been saved even if you cannot see them at all times.

**Q:** I am being prompted for a Username and Password when attempting to send my data to TRI. Why is this happening if I was able to log on to the software with no problem?

**A:** Please make sure that **WHEN YOU MODEM**, you are logging into DENS with your site's username and password rather than your personal login information. If your computer also requires you to login to Windows when you start up your computer, you should use the site name and password there also. ❖

## DENS SUPPORT

The Drug Evaluation Network System support staff operates Monday through Friday, 8:30 AM to 5:00 PM EST. When calling, please specify your name, and the facility from which you are calling.

All Site Specialists and Coordinators are able to answer questions about computer problems, data transfer, ASI coding, training, and study procedures.

## DENS STAFF

All Site Specialists and Coordinators may be reached via the DENS Toll-Free Support Helpline: 1-877-TRI-DENS.

### SITE SPECIALISTS

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## DENS In the News

*DENS staff presented DENS data at conference*

Michelle Boss  
Site Specialist

Every year in June, The College on Problems of Drug Dependence (CPDD) holds a scientific meeting bringing together governmental, industrial and academic communities interested in addressing problems of drug dependence and abuse.

This year, several of the DENS staff members were awarded poster presentations at the CPDD Annual Scientific Meeting. Using data collected through the DENS project, each staff member gathered statistical information to develop a poster on areas within substance abuse that interests them.

The following topics were selected by CPDD for participation in the meeting:

- Characteristics of substance abuse clients who are welfare recipients (Ackerman),
- OxyContin<sup>®</sup> use among substance abuse clients (Blue),
- Substance use related to the September 11<sup>th</sup> attacks (Boss),
- Substance use among supervised criminal justice clients (Bower),
- The DENS expansion into a national random sample, AND
- Development of an international DENS (Carise),
- Trends in women presenting for substance abuse treatment (Eyrich),
- The relationship of composite scores to DSM-IV dependence (Rikoon).

In addition, Amy Camilleri wrote about treatment history & its relationship to admission characteristics & treatment outcomes, from a prior study (non-DENS data.) ❖

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