



Drug Evaluation Network System

Volume 1, Issue 1

April 2003

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 spring.



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 are added to the DENS ASI software. In an effort to collect information on new areas of interest, we have added some additional questions in the following sections of the ASI: General Information, the Additional Drug Grid, Drug section, Legal section, Family/Social Section, and Psychiatric Section. These questions address religion, additional drug use, OxyContin 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 – First Quarter, 2003

Quarterly reports were also sent this month. These reports summarize data collected during the first quarter of 2003, January through March. Sites that have sent at least 50 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 January and March 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 has 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 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.

3. *Client reports receiving money from pensions in the employment section but reports getting no medical or psychiatric pension in a later ASI section.*

Question #s: E15, M5 & P3

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

4. *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 your treatment program before. Follow-up ASI's are generally completed by interviewers completing follow-up studies.

5. *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 previous to age 10 in order to count as one year of regular use. This is quite rare.

Client reports more than 17 drug treatment episodes in their 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. *Client reports more than 20 medical hospitalizations.*

Question #: M1

Remedy: Remind client you are looking only for the number of overnight hospitalizations, not the number of nights they spent in the hospital. Also, include only hospitalizations for medical ailments (including ODs and DTs requiring medical intervention, but NOT including detox, alcohol/drug/psychiatric treatment and childbirth with no complications).

7. *Client reports that they have been treated more than 49 times in an outpatient or office setting for psychological or emotional problems.*

Question #: P2

Remedy: This includes any type of treatment for any type of psychiatric problem on an outpatient basis. Remind the client that you are looking only for the number of treatment episodes, not the number of days they were seen in an outpatient setting. For example, if a client visited the same psychologist three days a week continuously for

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one year, this would equal **one** treatment episode. Exclude substance abuse, employment or family counseling, unless psychiatric treatment was received in these settings.

8. Client reports receiving 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.

9. No medical problems reported in past 30 days, yet client reports being bothered or needing treatment.

Question #s: M6, M7, & M8.

Remedy: Probe further! A client cannot be bothered by non-existent problems. Also, remind the client that this question asks about any treatment needed in addition to what they may already be receiving.

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
- 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 TOLL-FREE SUPPORT
HELPLINE:**

1-877-TRI-DENS



DENS In the News

DENS staff to present 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, six of the DENS staff members have been 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 proposal on areas within substance abuse that interests them.

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

- Characteristics of substance abuse clients who are welfare recipients (Ackerman),
- OxyContin use amongst substance abuse clients (Blue),
- Substance use related to the September 11th attacks (Boss),
- Substance use among supervised criminal justice clients (Bower), and
- The relationship of composite scores to DSM-IV dependence (Rikoon).

In addition, Amy Camilleri wrote about the outcomes of treatment naïve clients vs. clients who have previously been in treatment, from a prior study (non DENS data.) ❖

**DENS IS FUNDED BY: ONDCP
AND SAMSHA**

*Please email newsletter comments and
questions to jbower@tresearch.org*