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OPENING REMARKS

BY

THE HONORABLE JAMES K. STEWART, DIRECTOR  
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE

BEFORE

THE DRUG USE FORECASTING ADVISORY GROUP

9:05 A.M.

THURSDAY, JANUARY 11, 1990

THE RAMADA RENAISSANCE HOTEL

WASHINGTON, D.C.

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NOTE: Because Director Stewart often speaks from notes, the remarks as delivered may vary from the text. However, he stands behind this speech, as printed.

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When this illustrious group first met in November of 1988, the Drug Use Forecasting program was barely out of its infancy. Fourteen months later, I am pleased to report that not only is it alive and well; it is, in fact, THRIVING. Here are a few examples of its growth.

-- We included the term "forecasting" in the DUF title from the very beginning because we believed the program held that potential. Information developed from DUF can help treatment organizations allocate funding and decide what types of treatment are needed. The DUF finding in interviews among female arrestees that an exceptionally high proportion of them are injecting cocaine highlights the potential for an additional set of problems -- addicted infants, HIV-positive infants, and increases in child neglect.

Because DUF tracks trends and patterns, we hope to use it to track the effectiveness of our efforts to educate, treat, enforce, and to seize drugs. Up to now, DUF has been used mostly like a thermometer -- basically taking the temperature of the country. I'd like to see it used as a barometer -- as a predictor -- of better weather or of more storms in our fight against drugs. That's why I am delighted that Adele Harrel will be with us today to deliver an exciting paper which you will be hearing about and discussing this morning. Her findings demonstrate some of the data's forecasting power.

-- With 22 cities reporting and three more due to come on line within the next six months, and with several more quarters of data in the bank, we can now start to use DUF data to try out various ways of constructing a drug use index, as Ms. Christy Visser's example indicates.

-- You have also received papers done by Susan Pennell and Tom Mieczkowski -- examples of the work done by researchers at DUF sites -- using the program's national data base. We plan to encourage further research of that sort by establishing a small research program connected with DUF at NIJ.

-- Since the publication of the MMWR article, included in your materials packet -- that's the Centers for Disease Control's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report -- we are beginning to receive letters from doctors requesting further information about DUF. So there is a relationship with the medical community that is now being established.

-- Also since we first met, as those of you from NIDA and DEA well know, the DUF program staff has been meeting and sharing information with your staff members about ways of coordinating federal research and data collection efforts. Their goal, in keeping with the recommendations of the National Drug Control Strategy, is to eliminate both gaps and duplication in the data and to develop better analysis.

-- Finally, on the subject of the President's plan, I can't help mentioning what many of you may have noticed independently: namely, that the first table cited in the section on criminal justice presents DUF program data. We are very proud of the accomplishments symbolized by that inclusion.

Having said all of that, it is abundantly clear to us at NIJ that there is still an immense amount of work that needs to be done with and for DUF. No one is more aware than DUF managers that there are many questions and potential problems with the program's methodology and data sets that we need your help in answering. That, in fact, is the focus of today's agenda.

We also want to draw on your expertise in order to develop the DUF system's positive strengths, to make it even more valuable and useful to policymakers and practitioners. We need to set as a goal of this group the establishment of priorities among the tasks that still need doing in regard to dissemination.

The latter part of the day is set aside for looking ahead to subsequent meetings of this group, and to bringing in other persons who will be helpful to us in addressing the outreach priorities we set.

So thanks to NIJ staff who work on DUF and other research topics relating to Drugs and Crime, and who have prepared materials for this meeting. And special thanks -- as well as a warm word of welcome and appreciation -- to all of you distinguished advisors for being on hand to assist us.

With the nation's attention now being concentrated on how drug abuse affects the particular user population being studied by DUF, we have much important work to do. It is good that we are here to do it.