

A Social Barometer

Spring 2003

for Connecticut

2-1-1
INFOLINE

This news bulletin is published for state leaders, planners and others interested in Connecticut's well-being. This edition concentrates on data derived from calls regarding substance abuse over a five-year period.

Substance Abuse-Related Requests

1998-2002

Close to 300,000 calls are received annually at the 2-1-1 Infoline call center. The data collected on each of these calls serves as a barometer of human needs in the state. In addition to its 2-1-1 call center, United Way of Connecticut manages other call centers accessed by their own telephone numbers. Over 600,000 callers were helped last year by all of these social service call centers combined. As of February 1999, callers reached Infoline through its new three-digit telephone number, 2-1-1. Since then calls to 2-1-1 have increased by 79%.



Substance abuse, the focus of this edition, is consistently among the most frequently requested service needs of callers to 2-1-1 Infoline. The data reported here represent a specific subset of calls to 2-1-1 Infoline when callers self-identify substance abuse as their area of need for services.

This report describes the service needs and characteristics of users of alcohol and other drugs who called 2-1-1 Infoline over a five-year period from 1/1/1998 through 12/31/2002. Since callers often have several needs and requests, we report the data according to service requests, rather than calls. Our approach to this information focuses on the following questions:

- *What are the service needs of drug and alcohol users who call 2-1-1 Infoline?*
- *What are characteristics of callers associated with each request, including their treatment history and the substances they report using?*
- *Have drug and alcohol related requests increased between 1998 and 2002?*
- *What was the distribution of requests among Connecticut towns from 1998 through 2002?*
- *Where are substance abuse treatment resources located?*

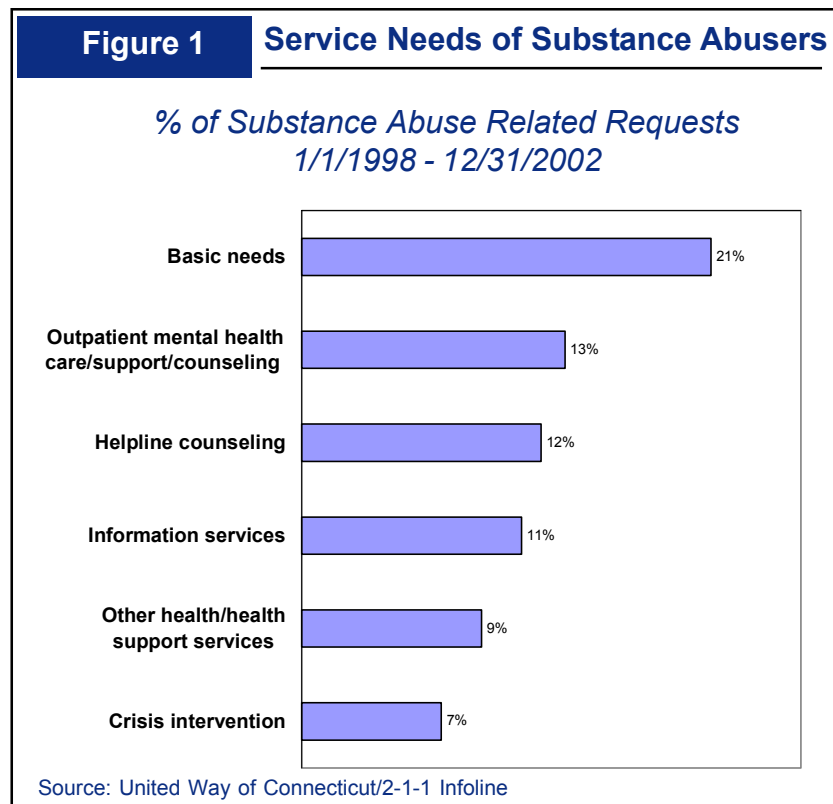


*Data analysis and report compiled by Georgine Burke, Ph.D., and Sandra Hale,
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What are the service needs of drug and alcohol users who call 2-1-1 Infoline?

Requests for treatment services are the most common (41%), including inpatient (11%), residential (11%), counseling (7%) and day treatment (5%). Requests for support groups for abusers or their friends/family account for almost one third (32%) of requests for substance abuse services. Fifteen percent of substance abuse service requests are from callers seeking inpatient detoxification.

People who use drugs and alcohol call 2-1-1 Infoline for information about treatment, but also have other service needs. Twenty-three percent of requests (28,440) were for other needs. Of these other needs, the most frequently requested services were for basic needs (food, housing/shelter, utilities, clothing, income assistance) (20.5%), outpatient mental health care support and counseling (13%), helpline counseling (12%), information services (11%), other health/health support services (9%) and crisis intervention (7%) (see Figure 1).



What are characteristics of callers associated with each request?

Persons needing substance abuse services must feel free to seek information in an environment of confidentiality. Therefore, 2-1-1 Infoline caseworkers do not systematically ask callers seeking substance abuse services to reveal information about their income, ethnicity, or other characteristics. However, among substance abuse related requests where these characteristics were identified, one third were for low-income persons and 6% were crisis-related. Just under 1% were identified as pregnant.

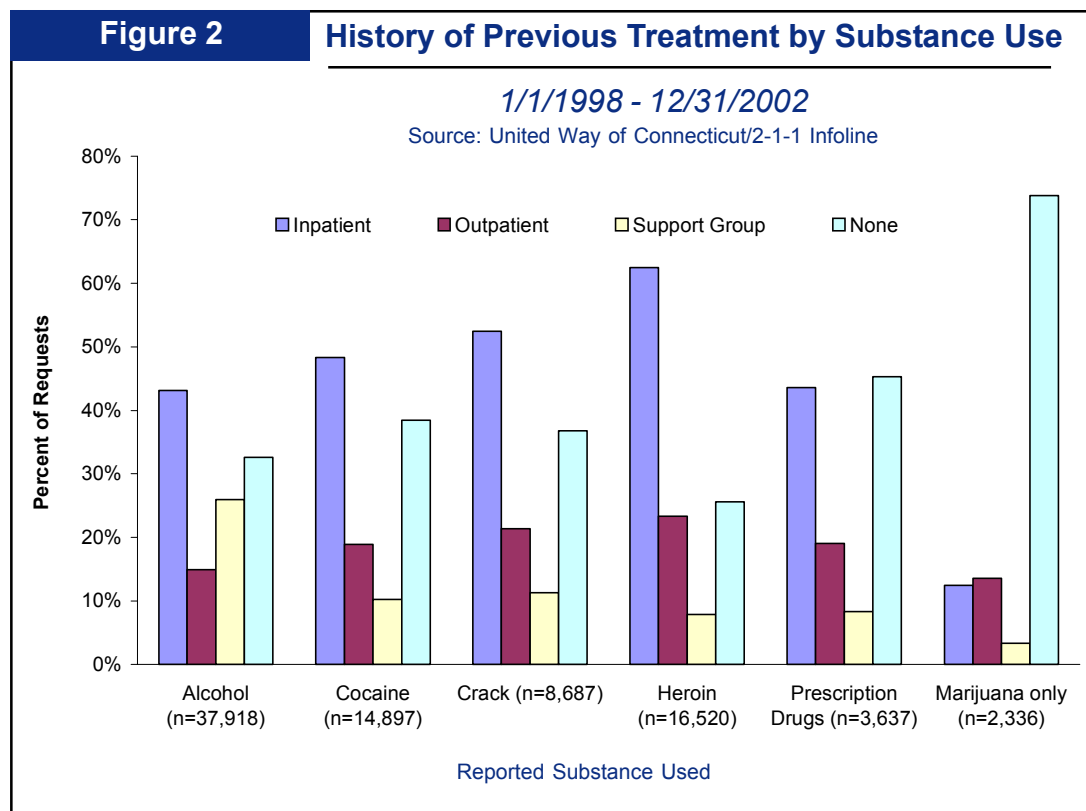
When callers seek other services or information, their substance use may or may not be reported. Among requests for low-income callers, 6% were identified as substance abuse related. Substance abuse was reported in 8% of unemployment requests, 3% of crisis-related requests and 2% of requests related to pregnancy.

Substance Use and Treatment History

When requesting substance abuse services, callers are asked about history of treatment for substance use and the kinds of substances that the person needing services is using. Among users of multiple drugs/alcohol, treatment history may be for any substance use in the past, and not necessarily associated with the current request. For example, a person calling about alcohol treatment may have had an inpatient experience in the past for another drug. Treatment history for each substance associated with a service request is shown in Figure 2. Although it would be possible to break out request data to show treatment history for every combination of drug/alcohol use, the results would be beyond the scope of this report.

As shown in Figure 2, heroin users are by far the most likely to have been treated on an inpatient basis and had the lowest percentage reporting no treatment history. Requests related to marijuana as the user's only substance were least likely to report any treatment history. Twelve-step support groups were the most common treatment for alcohol abusers.

Have drug and alcohol related requests increased since 1998?



Requests for substance abuse services have increased in the last five years, both in real numbers and at a rate higher than the rate of all caller requests during this time period.

Service requests for users of alcohol and other abuse potential drugs, including prescription drugs, increased more than 210% from 1998 through the end of 2002. During the same time period, requests for all service needs rose by 159%. The rate of increase for substance abuse related requests has exceeded the rate of increase for all requests to Infoline. This trend began in 2000. Figure 3 displays the

number of substance abuse related requests, compared to all requests for each of the five years. Substance abuse related requests in 2001 were 45% higher than 2000; 2002 requests were 55% above 2001. The increase for all requests was 28% between 2000-2001 and 34% between 2001-2002.

The proportion of all requests that were related to substance use remained relatively steady at 8-9% from 1998-2001, rising to 10.3% in 2002.

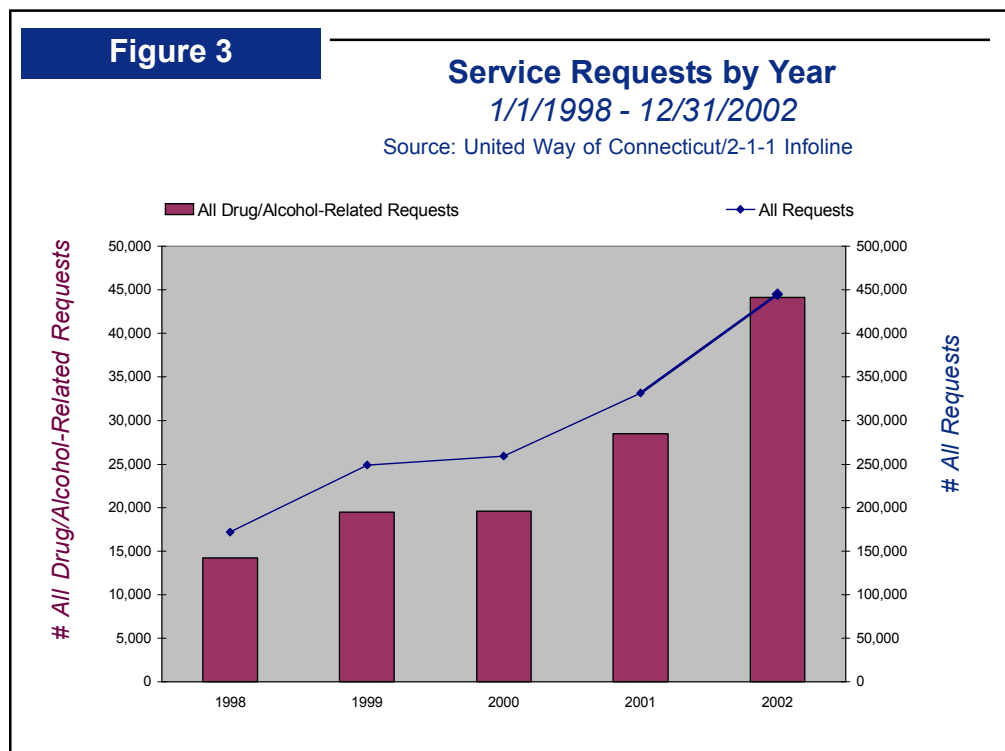
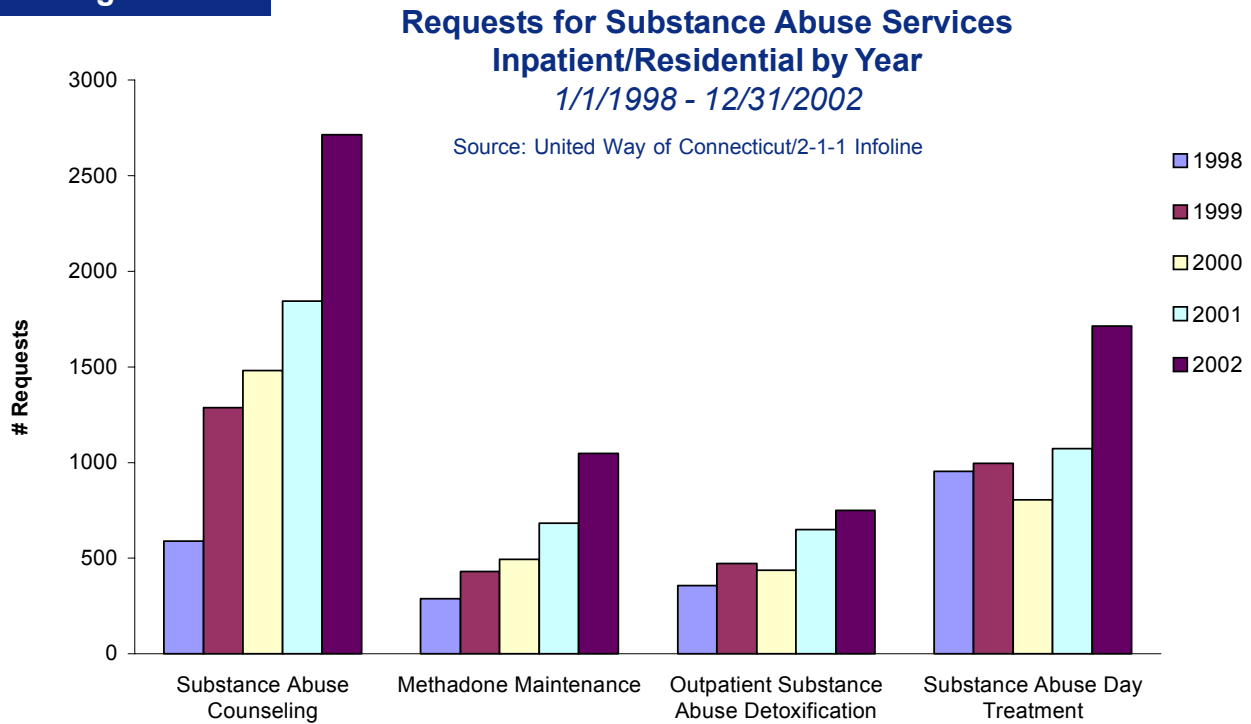
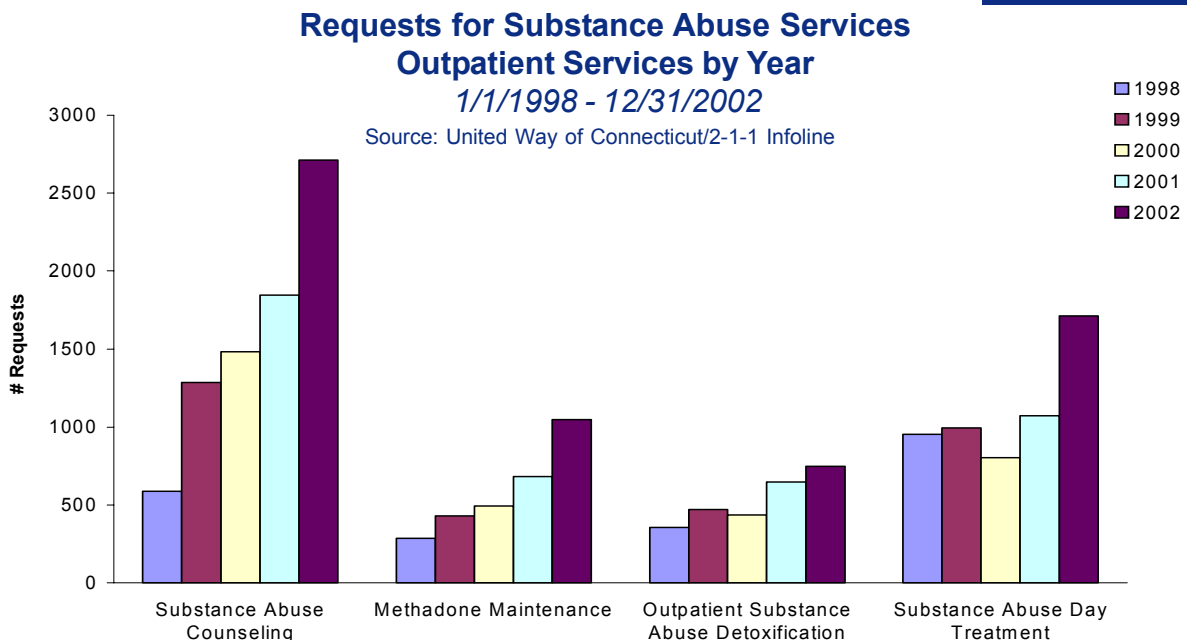


Figure 4



Requests for some types of treatment services have exceeded the increase overall. Between 1998 and 2002, requests for inpatient detoxification, residential treatment and supportive recovery homes, shown in Figure 4, increased by 486% and 455%, respectively. Among outpatient services, requests for counseling (361%) and methadone maintenance (266%) (Figure 5) also outstripped the overall rate of increase in service requests (210%) between 1998 and 2002.

Figure 5



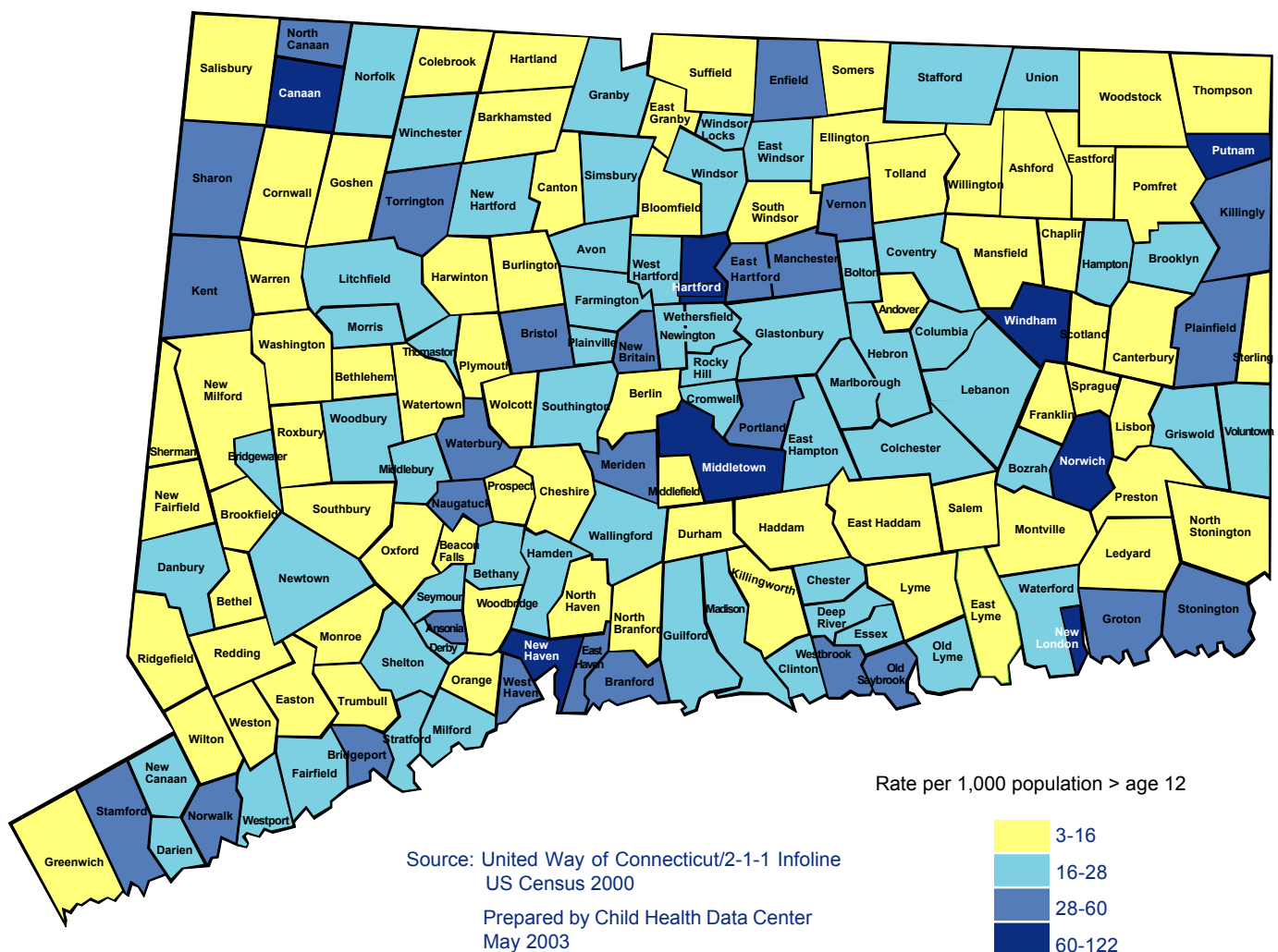
What was the distribution of requests among Connecticut towns from 1998 through 2002?

Using data from the 2000 Census (U.S. Department of Commerce), we compared all substance related requests from 1998 through 2002 to the numbers of persons age 13 and older residing in each of Connecticut's 169 towns. These rates, expressed as the number of requests for every 1,000 residents over age 12, are shown in Figure 6. Darker shading indicates a higher rate of requests. Despite the adjustment for population size, areas of greater population tended to have more requests. This may reflect higher need and demand in these areas. Alternatively, higher population areas may be more aware of and seek the services of 2-1-1 Infoline.

The request rate can be influenced by repeated calls to 2-1-1 Infoline for the same person. Repeat calls are less likely to affect the request rate in larger towns, but may partly explain higher rates observed in some smaller population areas of the state.

Figure 6

Requests for Substance Abuse Services 1/1/1998 - 12/31/2002

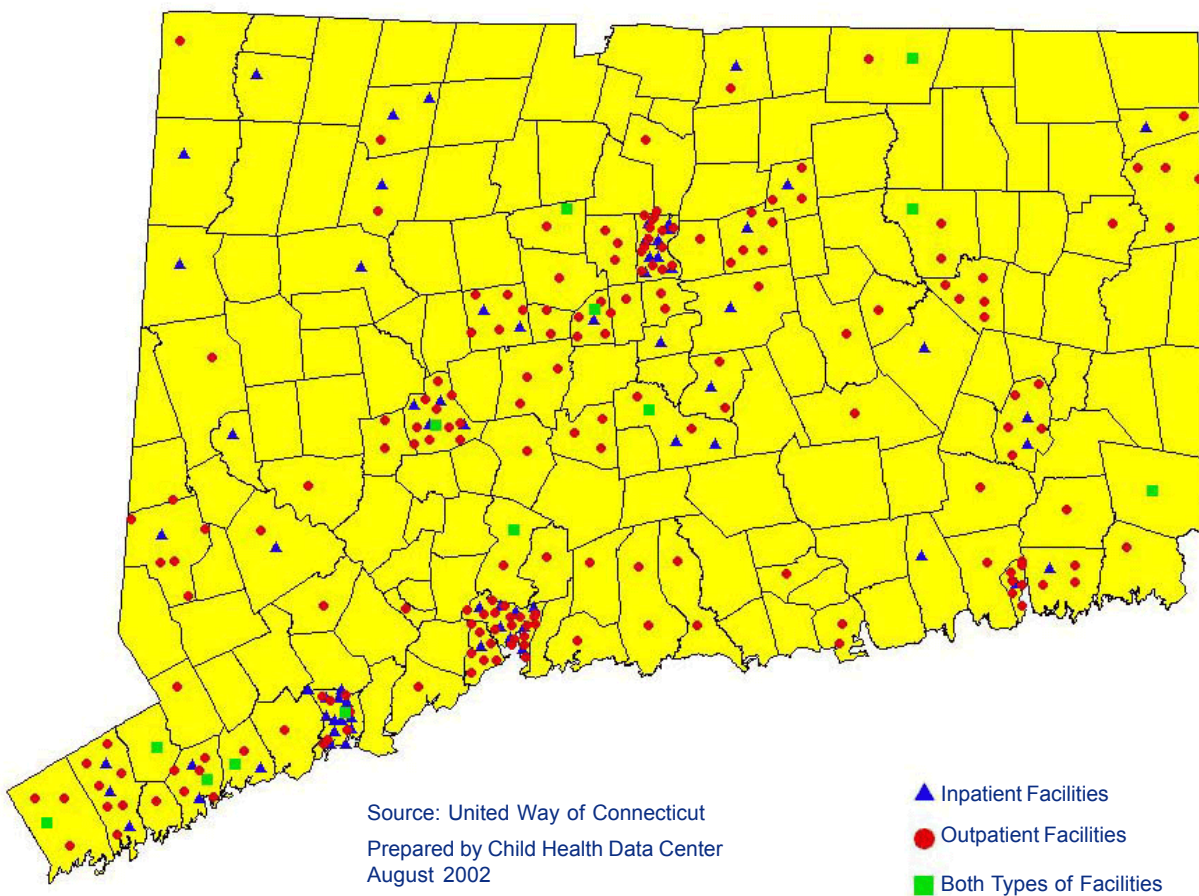


Where are substance abuse treatment resources located?

Figure 7 displays the location of 273 substance abuse treatment facilities in Connecticut, as of May 2002. The “inpatient” designation includes residential facilities. “Outpatient” includes day treatment. Both types of facilities tend to cluster in higher population areas of the state, especially urban areas. This is in part due to the association that many facilities have with urban hospitals. There are 76 towns that have substance abuse treatment facilities within their borders; 30 of these towns have inpatient facilities. Certain areas of the state, notably northern and eastern towns, as well as Litchfield County, have few local facilities and are not served by public transportation, which presents obstacles for access to these services.

Figure 7

Substance Abuse Treatment Facilities as of May 2002



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