



The Washington Circle

Performance Measurement For Care of Substance Abuse Disorders

## **The Ecology of Adolescent Substance Abuse Service Utilization**

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### **Abstract**

This paper presents an ecological-community model toward the explanation of variation in patterns of substance abuse service utilization among adolescents who are enrolled in Tennessee's Medicaid program (TennCare). Guided by a theoretical framework that draws from the social ecology work of Bronfenbrenner and health services utilization models promoted by Aday and Andersen, we apply a social indicators approach toward explaining the impact of community ecology on the Washington Circle indicators of identification of substance abuse and treatment engagement. Both county-level rates and individual-level treatment utilization are examined and hierarchical linear modeling is incorporated to examine the individual-in-community phenomenon. This study is an expansion of previous service utilization research and suggests that explanations of youth's service utilization must necessarily include not only individual, familial, and service system characteristics, but community factors, as well.