

specmind

From: "Donny Gann" <dgann@jhsph.edu>
To: <rgb@cognitiveliberty.org>
Sent: Monday, February 05, 2001 8:08 AM
Subject: mdma sentencing guidelines

To the Sentencing Commission: I have worked for the last 7 years as an interviewer and HIV counselor in studies of injection drug users' risks for contracting HIV. In my position, I have had ample opportunity to witness the destructive effects of heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine on the personalities and social relationships of users and addicts. During this time, I have also been aware of the increasing use of MDMA by young people through media reports and through contact with young users. Based on my experience and observation, I am writing in strong opposition to the proposed new sentencing guidelines for MDMA and related substances.

Unlike heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine, MDMA is not physically or even psychologically addictive, as the Commission has heard. Given this, I can see no reason MDMA should be treated as severely as heroin, a drug which is highly addictive, and which compels addicts to behave in severely antisocial ways in order to procure their drug. We simply do not find MDMA users stealing from others, including friends and family, resorting to prostitution or to violence to make money to buy MDMA. All of these behaviors are common among many users of heroin, cocaine and methamphetamine.

I understand that the Commission must increase the penalties due to Congressional mandate. Given that MDMA use is not addictive nor socially destructive, I feel that the increase should be far smaller than that proposed. I feel that MDMA has yet to cause anything like the sort of personal and social destruction we have seen from powder cocaine, and so I believe the penalty should be less than that for cocaine. Under no circumstances should it be greater.

Donald Gann
Johns Hopkins School of Public Health

[96]

2/5/2001