

Drugs

(From Page A 1)

and Society" in College Hall, St. George.

CSI professor Mary Ruth Culbert spoke about adult children of alcoholics, and Dr. Phyllis Chesler, also a faculty member, outlined gaps in treatment services for women and minorities.

Webb, who detailed his agency's strategy before Dr. Chesler spoke, said pregnant addicts will be priority recipients of treatment. He plans to implement programs with strict monitoring for drug abusers released from prisons.

Prevention services aimed at first-time drug and alcohol users, primarily 9- and 10-year-old boys, also rank high in Webb's plans. First-time drug use is down 35 percent from a year ago, he said.

Also encouraging is the leveling off of crack use, he said, "but we still have an epidemic." There are 50,000 substance abusers seeking recovery in the DSAS system, but "we need to get the system up to 200,000."

Heroin remains a threat, and Southeast Asian producers are responding to "market demand" for a purer form of the drug that can be inhaled. Injecting heroin has become unpopular because the sharing of dirty needles can

spread the HIV virus that causes AIDS.

Methadone, a synthetic narcotic that alleviates the craving for opiates such as heroin, is a "cheap" and "simple" solution for heroin addiction, "but we're looking for the best solution," Webb said. Critics say methadone is not a real treatment but a substitute drug that is at least as addictive as heroin.

Webb reiterated the often-heard call for a three-pronged approach to beating drug abuse: Law enforcement, treatment and prevention. He rejects the terminology of a "war on drugs" because the metaphor implies to him that drug users are losers in the treatment war.

Treatment works, he said, but the average addict will not succeed the first time through. A drug abuser often has "four to six treatment episodes over a lifetime ... sometimes as many as 10," Webb said.

"The No. 1 social issue, besides educating our children and, I hope, keeping us out of a war, has to be dealing with drug abuse," Webb said. "It absolutely permeates every aspect of our society."

Fifty-five thousand young people are in prisons; 100,000 are in jails, he said. Many crimes are drug-related, but the offenders

are not receiving meaningful treatment.

Of the state's 63,000 children in foster care, 60 percent of the placements are due to drug and alcohol problems in families.

Alcohol is "very strongly abused," Webb said, and many drug abusers also are addicted to alcohol.

DSAS, which licenses drug abuse treatment programs and provides funding for treatment and prevention, will merge in a few years with the state Division of Alcoholism and Alcohol Abuse, he said. The union should streamline the work of many treatment providers who have to deal with dual licenses and reporting and accounting procedures.

Despite the state's budget deficit, the governor's commitment to increase treatment and prevention programs remains firm, Webb said.

Legislative leaders continue to negotiate Cuomo's proposed cuts to close a \$1 billion deficit. The governor wants to chop DSAS' current budget by \$23.5 million, nearly all of it in local assistance. But his projected cuts for the next fiscal year, beginning April 1, 1991, would amount to only \$1.5 million, and those funds could be

Handwritten signature and scribbles.