Ending the Meth Epidemic
By JoBeth McCarthy-Jean, MPH

Methamphetamine (also known as meth, ice, crystal, poor man’s cocaine, crank, go-fast, tweak, glass, or crystal meth) is impacting the safety of our children, families, and communities. Manufactured in homes, barns, apartment buildings, even table-top mobile labs, meth is considered one of the most harmful drugs in America. With less than $100.00 of basic household products, cookers of meth can significantly increase their initial expense within a matter of days. Children living in these homes or with meth users pay the highest price. According to the National Alliance for Drug-Endangered Children, one-third of all meth labs seized have children present. Often, these children test positive for the drug. Worse yet, we still don’t know what the long term implications are for environmental exposure among children to the toxic chemicals used to produce meth.

A powerfully addictive central nervous system stimulant, meth can be smoked, snorted, ingested orally or intravenously. Meth users experience a high that can last for many hours, and users often binge on the drug for days. Immediately, the drug causes increased blood pressure, dilated pupils, mild to severe dehydration, decreased appetite, paranoia, and nervousness. Once the drug begins to wear off, users experience an overwhelming urge for more and will seek to replenish their high. For many users, addiction is likely, treatment challenging, and is costing Indiana and its tax payers more than $100 million dollars annually.
Daniels has placed Indiana’s meth epidemic as a top priority to be addressed by state and local law enforcement, prevention, and treatment agencies.

Governor Mitchell Daniels signed into law one of the most sweeping pieces of legislation that will monitor and control the illegal manufacturing of methamphetamine. This legislation is the cornerstone of the state’s plan to address the meth epidemic. Beginning July 1, 2005, Senate Enrolled Act 444 (more commonly known as the “Indiana Methamphetamine Protection Act”) will:

- monitor and control the sale of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine (ingredients commonly found in cold and allergy medications that are used to produce meth);
- require retailers to “keep medications containing ephedrine or pseudoephedrine behind a counter, in a locked case or directly in front of a pharmacy counter that has video surveillance”;
- sales are restricted to those 18 years or older purchasers must show a photo ID;
- sign a log book and;
- limit the sale of more than 100 tablets of ephedrine and pseudoephedrine products per week, per person.

Governor Daniels has appointed the Indiana Criminal Justice Institute (ICJI), led by Executive Director, Heather Bolejack, to lead the Meth Free Indiana Coalition. Steven King, Division Director of the ICJI’s Drug and Crime Division, is providing the leadership needed to implement the Meth Watch Program to reduce the production and use of methamphetamine in Indiana. Staff at ICJI have already begun the process of coordinating a state plan, launched a website www.MethFreeIndiana.org, and developed education and training materials for Indiana retailers and the general public.

Preventing meth requires applying the principles of prevention and employing multiple strategies across many sectors of the community. Statewide, prevention providers are engaged in participatory, community-based activities that encourage residents to report suspicious activity; place meth awareness and education as a priority for their community; and instituting mechanisms to address treatment needs for victims of meth use and their children.

Soon, the IPRC will release data on youth prevalence rates among Indiana’s children and adolescents. This data will be used to leverage more funding into the state for prevention and treatment of methamphetamine. Additional data is available in presentation-ready format at www.drugs.indiana.edu.

Meth Prevention and Reduction Resources

- Indiana Prevention Resource Center: www.drugs.indiana.edu
- Indiana State Police: http://www.in.gov/isp/divisions/drug.html
- Meth Free Indiana Coalition: www.MethFreeIndiana.org

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