

What is Methamphetamine?

- Sometimes called "crank" or "speed", Methamphetamine or Meth is a highly addictive stimulant manufactured from a variety of chemical agents.
- Methamphetamine is different from other illegal drugs because it is highly addictive, can be manufactured utilizing readily accessible chemicals and is very hard to treat.
- Methamphetamine spawns a significant amount of crime and people under its influence can be violent. Simply, methamphetamine use increases the potential for other criminal activity.
- Methamphetamine can be inhaled, smoked, or injected.

Why is Meth so dangerous?

- The drug works directly on the brain and spinal cord by interfering with normal neurotransmissions—thereby impacting the user's ability to influence and regulate thinking and other systems throughout the body.
- Meth can cause brain damage through the dopamine depletion and increased blood pressure and heart rate that cause stroke and death of brain tissue.
- Meth can cause an irregular heart beat that can lead to heart attack.
- The use of meth causes increased heart rate, blood pressure, sweating, restlessness, and anxiety.
- Meth increases grandiosity that often leads to impulsive risk-taking behaviors such as violence and sexual promiscuity.
- The effects of the drug can last for 12 hours so insomnia is common, but coming down from the drug causes depression and fatigue.
- Regular meth use requires a long recovery period during which time there is a great deal of depression and the feeling of little if any pleasure in life.

Is Meth a problem in Montana?

- During 2000, 4% of the U.S. population reported trying methamphetamine at one time during their lifetime.
- According to the Drug Enforcement Agency website, methamphetamine abuse is concentrated in the western, southwestern, and Midwestern United States.

- According to the Drug Enforcement Agency website, in 2004 there were 63 identified drug laboratories in Montana.
- The DEA reports that, "according to law enforcement officers across the state, methamphetamine is one of the most significant drug problems in Montana."
- According to a 2001 study, 13% of Montana high school students reported they used Meth.
- Of the 6,902 admissions to treatment programs in 2001, 12% indicated that meth was their drug of choice.
- Methamphetamine use does discriminate with regard to gender, age, ethnicity, or socio-economic status.
- Children with meth-addicted parents face major problems, including abuse and neglect, and exposure to toxic chemicals. National statistics show that 32% of the children taken out of homes where meth is manufactured or distributed tested positive for the drug.
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- For 2001, the Montana Department of Health and Human Services' special report on alcohol and drugs reported that out of 8,365 admissions in state-approved programs for alcohol and drugs, 1,530 of those admissions, or 18% were for methamphetamine.
- In fiscal year 1995, 15% of the people treated in state approved chemical dependency programs had meth as their drug of choice; by fiscal year 2003, this number had increased to 29%.
- Despite the high number of Montanans seeking treatment, according to the 2002 report of the Alcohol, Tobacco, and Other Drug Control Policy Task Force, for 88% of Montana adults who need substance abuse treatment, treatment was either not available or they did not seek it.
- There are a high percentage of offenders in the Montana correctional system who require some level of treatment for meth or other poly-drug use addictions.

What are the Costs of Meth Use?

- The physical costs include: brain damage, heart damage, kidney and lung

disorders, liver damage, and death.

- The psychological costs include: depression, decreased executive brain functioning, lost relationships, paranoid psychosis, etc.
- Meth use also causes violence and other crimes.
- Meth use has a tremendous impact on the user and his/her family and support structures.
- Meth users have a higher risk for HIV and Hepatitis C.
- The cost of secure incarceration for a drug addict is \$40,000 to \$100,000. In comparison, the cost of treatment for the same addict is approximately \$14,000 to \$22,000.

How does House Bill #326 Address Montana's Methamphetamine Problem?

- Revisions to 45-9-102 provide treatment as an option for 2nd or subsequent offense of criminal possession of methamphetamine.
- Revisions to 45-9-102 provide for both holding offenders accountable for their actions as well as increasing the likelihood of success upon return to their communities.
- Revisions to 45-9-102 encourage offenders to successfully complete treatment in lieu of the possibility of stiff imprisonment penalties.
- Revisions to 45-9-102 provide treatment as an option for 2nd or subsequent offense of criminal possession of methamphetamine.
- Revisions to 45-9-102 provide for conditions of community supervision to be implemented following completion of treatment.

SUMMARY

Methamphetamine has become a problem of epic proportions for Montana. A unified, collaborative, and comprehensive approach to its eradication is necessary to help current and future generations. Passage of House Bill 326 is an important first step in that process. Ratification also sends a clear message about the willingness of the Montana Legislature to take a lead in the "Fight Against Meth".

