The Impacts of Meth in Mesa County

The impact of Methamphetamine in Mesa County has reached epidemic proportions. Meth has significant impacts on the user, their children and our community.

The User
There are physical and mental health costs associated with the use of meth. Regular use causes severe tooth decay, liver damage, increased heart rate, high blood pressure and insomnia. Addicts also suffer from paranoia and isolate themselves. Users may experience hallucinations or hear voices. The results can be unpredictable, violent behavior - making them dangerous to themselves and others.

The Community
More inmates in the Mesa County Jail have used meth than have not. In fact nearly fifty percent of inmates surveyed reported being in possession of meth when they were arrested and nearly eighty percent reported being high on meth when arrested.

Most of the cases in District Court are meth related. Meth is causing auto theft, auto burglary, purse snatching and credit card offenses. Felony property crimes have grown at a rate greater than that of population growth and from 2000 to 2004 forgery cases increased by 190%. Meth addicts are paranoid, unpredictable and dangerous. They also present a high rate of failure to appear in court.

Between 2000 and 2005 the Mesa County Joint Drug Taskforce seized, on average, $1 million of meth per year. Most of this meth is coming from Mexico and only a small portion is actually being produced in Mesa County.

Meth is big business and without consistent, coordinated enforcement, additional dealers or users may locate to our area.

When asked why they first started using meth, fifty-two percent of the inmates interviewed in the Mesa County Jail reported that it was a friend, a family member or a partner who first got them started.
Meth Taskforce

All citizens are welcome and encouraged to join the Meth Taskforce. The taskforce meets the first Thursday of each month at 7:30 am in the Multi-purpose room of the Old Courthouse at 544 Rood. Each month educational presentations are made on a variety of topics.

The real work of the taskforce is done in the committees. Citizens are welcome and encouraged to join one or more of the committees.

Prevention Committee
The focus of this committee is to identify and implement activities that have been proven to prevent the use of meth. Activities could include public relations campaigns, educational programs, and addressing some of the social issues that lead to substance abuse in the first place. This committee works with law enforcement, public and private schools, human services, the media and other appropriate groups.

Enforcement Committee
This committee works to advocate for laws, and the necessary resources to enforce them, that will help to eliminate meth in Mesa County. This committee works with all law enforcement agencies in the valley and the District Attorney in their endeavors.

Public Relations Committee
This committee works with all other committees and the entire meth taskforce to develop and implement public relation strategies that raise the awareness of the problem of meth in Mesa County and how citizens can get involved to create a meth free Mesa County.

Drug Endangered Children Committee
Children and youth are the biggest victims in the meth epidemic. It is critical that we intervene early so that we can protect the children from harm and redirect them so that they don’t repeat the cycle of drug use. This committee works with human services, public and private schools, and law enforcement in order to ensure these children don’t fall through the cracks, and are appropriately helped once they are identified.

Treatment Committee
Meth use has reached an epidemic proportion in Mesa County. Not only can we not build enough jails to hold addicts, once released they only go back to the drug and a life of crime to support their habit. It is imperative that appropriate treatment is available.

Drug Endangered Children

Individuals who are interested in helping either children or families involved in the Child Protection System can get involved in a variety of ways. Opportunities include:

Foster Parent
Over seventy-five percent of the children living in foster care today are there as a direct result of meth. Those children are at an extremely high risk of using meth themselves as they get older. For most it is the only way of life they have known. But caring adults, willing to take these children in their home, can make all the difference in the world. As more and more children come into foster care as a result of meth, the foster homes available are dwindling. Because of a shortage of foster homes, sometimes brothers and sisters are separated in different homes and some have to leave the county all together. Loving, nurturing foster parents can make the single most positive difference in ridding our community of the cycle of meth.

Youth Mentor
Over 51 percent of the inmates surveyed in the Mesa County jail reported they first tried meth with a friend, a family member or a partner. Nearly all of them said they believe their life would have turned out differently had they chosen different friends. This highlights the need for positive role models for youth. At any given time there are over 50 boys on the waiting list for a Senior Partner, and most of them will wait two years to be matched. But meth has no waiting list. It is always looking for its next victim. This is where citizens can get involved and make a difference. Just a couple of hours can change a life forever. For more information call Partners at 245-5555.

CASA Volunteer
The purpose of Court-Appointed Special Advocates (C.A.S.A.) is to screen and train citizen volunteers to speak in court on behalf of children who are the victims of abuse or neglect. No special knowledge or experience in human services or law is required. C.A.S.A. is looking for volunteers who believe children deserve a loving, nurturing environment and who are willing to speak out for them.

Benevolent Community Partnership
Many of the issues that face meth addicts and their families, include issues such as poverty, housing, employment and education just to name a few. Fortunately there are many non-profits and faith based groups that work to address these social issues.

The Benevolent Community Partnership was formed in order to better coordinate those services thereby eliminating duplication and filling gaps. The Benevolent Community Partnership focuses on eight areas which include:

Housing • Health Care • Substance Abuse Employment • Families • Senior Citizens Youth • Basic Needs /Food

For information about how you, your church or any other Benevolent agency can get involved go to: www.mesacounty.us

For more information about any of these opportunities contact
InfoLine- at 2-1-1 (or 244-8400 from a cell phone)
www.infoline.mesacounty.us