



Methamphetamine leads list as top drug problem

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By LYNDA METZ

Meth is the top drug of choice and the number one drug problem in Idaho. Law enforcement officials, drug counselors and state legislators agree there has never been a drug as powerful, addictive and quick to destroy lives and communities as methamphetamine. The financial and social consequences of meth abuse are devastating. Consider these statistics:

- Eighty percent of the child placements by the Idaho Department of Health and Welfare are directly related to drug abuse, with meth being the most prevalent.
- Sixty-three percent of Idaho felony drug court participants indicate that meth is their drug of choice.
- Fifty-two percent of Idaho inmates directly attribute meth use to their incarceration.
- Idaho spends \$66 million annually to house adult male inmates who admit to having a meth problem.
- Idaho ranks ninth in the U.S. for dependence or abuse of illegal drugs or alcohol among ages 12-17.

On Jan. 7, 2008, Gov. C.L. "Butch" Otter announced the official launch of the Idaho Meth Project. The goal of the Idaho Meth Project is to significantly reduce the prevalence of first-time methamphetamine use in Idaho through public service messaging, public policy and community outreach. The program is part of a national program that was first implemented in Montana in 2005. Since its inception, the Montana Meth Project has demonstrated significant results:

- When the program launched, Montana ranked fifth in the nation for meth abuse; after two years of the project, the state ranked 39th.
- Teen meth use in Montana has declined by 45 percent.
- Meth-related crimes declined by 53 percent.
- There was a 70-percent decrease in workers testing positive for meth.

Bonner General Hospital has joined other hospitals and businesses across the state in supporting the Idaho Meth Project and its mission to educate our citizens about the devastating impact of meth use. Help us arm our youth with the information they need to remain meth-free. Read next week's article to learn more about meth, how it's made and its effects on users.

• Lynda Metz is the director of community development at Bonner General Hospital. The facts and statistics in this article were reprinted from the Idaho Meth Project Web site. For more information, please visit www.idahomethproject.org.