



## **Official: Meth message works More teens, young adults recognize danger of drug**

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COEUR d'ALENE — The results are in — and they're shocking. One in seven young adults in Idaho has tried meth, and one in five admit having a close friend who uses the drug.

"It's been a problem in Idaho," said Megan Ronk, Idaho Meth Project director. "You'd only have to look at the results in our criminal justice system to see the impact of meth, but it is moving in the right direction."

That direction is an increase in teens and young adults who recognize the danger of meth abuse thanks partly to an advertising campaign conducted by the Idaho Meth Project.

The 2-year-old nonprofit organization launched a mass media campaign across Idaho last year, which features public service spots showing the gritty realities of meth addiction to "unsell" meth to those most vulnerable to trying it for the first time.

Results from the project's second statewide 'Idaho Meth Use and Attitudes Survey' show that while Idaho still suffers from the ravages of methamphetamine use — it's ranked seventh out of 50 states in cases of abuse — teens and young adults across the state are more aware of the impact of the deadly drug than a year ago.

Teens experienced the biggest spike in the awareness: 82 percent of teens say there is "great" or "moderate" risk to taking meth once or twice, up 5 percent from the benchmark study. Sixty-three percent of those feel there is great risk, up 8 percent since the year before.

Also up are the number of teens who would strongly disapprove of taking the drug once, 83 percent, while 71 percent said their friends would give them a hard time if they tried it even once. Six out of 10 teens have told a friend not to use it. Ronk said while it's too soon for statistics to tell if the ads are changing Idaho attitudes about the highly addictive drug, they are having an impact.

"In the world of prevention we've see a pretty significant shift in terms of what young people throughout the state think about meth," she said. "They perceive greater risk in using the drug and they're talking to their friends." The project's ads show the ravages of methamphetamine use — the haggard faces etched with tears and fear, the stained jailhouse mattress, the emergency room — and a half dozen new billboards sprang up around North Idaho last week as part of the campaign, including in Post Falls on Spokane Street north of Third Street and in Athol off U.S. 95 south of Bertsch Avenue.

In the second survey, young adults between the ages of 18-24 also showed improvement in recognition of the dangers of meth.

Ninety-two percent feel great or moderate risk to taking it once or twice, while only 8 percent feel there is little to no risk — both up from the previous year.

"We're moving the needle, and the kids are paying attention," Ronk said.

Information: [www.idaho-methproject.org](http://www.idaho-methproject.org)