

IDAHO METH PROJECT

Economic Study Estimates Meth Use Costs the U.S. \$23.4 Billion

Boise, Idaho—February 4, 2009—A RAND Corporation study released today, “The Economic Cost of Methamphetamine Use in the United States,” estimates that the national cost of Meth use exceeds \$23 billion annually. The study marks the first time that the annual cost of methamphetamine abuse has been analyzed on a national scale.

Researchers found that methamphetamine use imposes a significant and disproportionate burden on both individuals and society through money spent on treatment, healthcare, and social services, as well as the costs of crime and lost productivity associated with the drug. The findings highlight the continued need for proven prevention programs, such as the Idaho Meth Project, that can help curb future costs by reducing Meth use and addiction.

According to the RAND study, law enforcement and the criminal justice system bear one of the greatest financial burdens, making up more than 15%—\$4 billion—of the total amount spent on Meth abuse each year. Idaho spends between \$60 and \$102 million annually to incarcerate and treat offenders who admit to having a Meth problem, representing between 32-55% of the Idaho Department of Correction’s total budgetⁱ. Based on the RAND research model and current usage rates in Idaho, Meth use could cost the state of Idaho more than \$300 million each year.

“As we look for opportunities to be good stewards of taxpayer dollars, it is clear that the impact of Meth use is monopolizing a tremendous amount of resources on a federal, state, and local level,” said U.S. Senator Mike Crapo. “Meth abuse can be prevented—and all of us must continue to work together to ensure that the next generation of Idahoans makes the choice to stay away from this horrific drug.”

“The human costs of methamphetamine are incredibly destructive. When you take into account the real fiscal impact of the drug, the situation becomes completely untenable,” said Representative Mike Simpson, Idaho’s Second Congressional District. “From the moment Governor Otter first brought the Meth Project prevention model to my attention, I was an ardent supporter. We will not overcome our Meth problem without a clear strategy that includes aggressive support for prevention efforts.”

“Our goal in sponsoring this study was to provide a definitive economic cost estimate of the Meth problem that legislators and regulators can consider while establishing social priorities,” said Tom Siebel, founder and chairman of the Meth Project. “This appears to be a preventable problem. The staggering economic and human costs of Meth use can be avoided.”

The Idaho Meth Project, a large-scale prevention program aimed at reducing Meth use among Idaho’s youth through public service messaging, public policy, and community outreach, first launched in January, 2008. Idaho ranks #7 in the country for lifetime Meth use by high school students.ⁱⁱ According to prevention experts, reducing Meth use among teens and young adults will have a measurable impact on the number of people who need assistance with drug treatment and recovery later in life. Since July, 2007, the state of Idaho has spent nearly \$500,000 every month on methamphetamine-related treatment, representing more than 40% of the state’s total drug and alcohol treatment dollars.ⁱⁱⁱ

The Idaho Meth Project has garnered significant support among the state’s residents. The Project has recruited over 600 volunteers to support its grass-roots community outreach activities, raising public awareness about the dangers of Meth use at school and community events across the state. These gatherings allow Idahoans to have frank and open discussions about how Meth affects individuals, families, and communities.

“I am amazed at the positive impact of the Idaho Meth Project,” said recovering addict Shelley Mitchell, who has participated in several community forums across the state to share her story of Meth addiction. “When I share my story with teens, I can see that I’m getting through to them. I hope that being open about the decisions that brought about my own addiction will help steer young people away from Meth and keep them on the right track.”

The Idaho Meth Project is modeled on a successful Meth Project program first initiated in Montana. Since the Project’s implementation in Montana and Arizona, both states have experienced 45% declines in teen Meth use.^{iv v}

The Idaho Meth Project is already beginning to significantly change attitudes about the dangers of Meth among young people. Last week, the Project released the results of the 2008 *Idaho Meth Use & Attitudes Survey*, the second statewide survey conducted to examine the attitudes and behaviors that Idaho teens, young adults, and parents have toward methamphetamine. The survey findings show that since the launch of the Idaho Meth Project’s prevention campaign, more Idaho teens and young adults view Meth use as dangerous, and they are more aware of the specific, negative effects of trying the drug. Ninety percent of parents say they have talked to their children about the dangers of Meth—with half reporting that a television advertisement prompted the conversation.^{vi}

The Idaho Meth Project recently unveiled its latest advertising campaign, which is scheduled to run statewide through the end of 2009. The campaign will reach 70-80% of Idaho’s teens three to five times per week.

To view the full results of the RAND study, please visit www.methproject.org. To view the complete 2008 *Idaho Meth Use & Attitudes Survey* report, please visit the Idaho Meth Project’s website at www.idahomethproject.org.

About the Idaho Meth Project

The Idaho Meth Project is a non-profit organization that implements a range of advertising and community action programs to reduce methamphetamine use in the state. Launched in January, 2008, the Idaho Meth Project leverages a proven model that combines extensive research with a hard-hitting, integrated media campaign. The Idaho Meth Project is affiliated with the Meth Project, a national nonprofit organization headquartered in Palo Alto, California, aimed at significantly reducing Meth use through public service messaging, public policy, and community outreach. For more information, visit www.idahomethproject.org.

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ⁱ Idaho Department of Corrections. 2008.

ⁱⁱ Center for Disease Control, “Youth Risk Behavior Survey.” 2008.

ⁱⁱⁱ Idaho Department of Health and Welfare. 2008.

^{iv} Montana Office of Public Instruction, “2007 Montana Youth Risk Behavior Survey.” September 2007.

^v Arizona Criminal Justice Division, “2008 Arizona Youth Survey.” 2008

^{vi} Idaho Meth Project, “2008 Idaho Meth Use & Attitudes Survey.” 2008.