VERMONT2007

Methamphetamine Public Information Campaign

Report to the Legislature on **Act 164 - 18 V.S.A. § 4234b**
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VERMONT
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH
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Methamphetamine – An Overview

Methamphetamine is a highly addictive stimulant that affects the central nervous system. It comes in many forms and can be smoked, snorted, injected or orally ingested.

The drug's lure is that in small doses, methamphetamine can cause wakefulness and physical activity while decreasing appetite. Even in small doses, methamphetamine can cause a variety of cardiovascular problems. Long-term use often results in a variety of symptoms including extreme anxiety, confusion, mood disturbances and violent behavior.

Nationally, methamphetamine use continues to spread eastward, both in rural and urban areas. Compared to the methamphetamine problem seen in the west, southwest and southeast, there is little evidence of an increased amount of methamphetamine seeking behavior in Vermont at this time.

Through its continued methamphetamine prevention activities, Vermont may successfully limit the demand for the drug.

Methamphetamine Education in Vermont

2005 Statewide Methamphetamine Summit
On January 31, 2005, approximately 84 Vermont leaders gathered for a statewide summit to discuss the issue of methamphetamine and its impact on Vermonters. Attendees were leaders from a variety of Vermont sectors including the legislature, judicial and legal, medical and health, state employees, substance abuse treatment providers, local substance abuse prevention coalitions, and the business community (Appendix I).

The second day of the summit focused on training about methamphetamine and its potential impact in Vermont. Approximately 119 people attended this session. Attendance included state employees (Departments of Corrections, Vocational Rehabilitation, Liquor Control, Fish & Wildlife, Children & Families, Education, Health; VT State Police; Agency of Human Services; Agency of Natural Resources; VT Forensic Lab), legal and judicial professionals, hospital staff, pharmacists, retailers, local law enforcement from 16 towns and youth services professionals.

The summit produced a detailed methamphetamine educational map for Vermont which focused on prevention efforts and resulted in the development of the state's Methamphetamine Advisory Committee.

2005 Statewide Methamphetamine Education for Vermont Professionals
Stemming from the summit, the Methamphetamine Advisory Committee's Education subcommittee began a two-year educational focus for professionals that work with youth and families, and Vermont's first responders. Participants included professionals who conduct home visits and anticipated providing education to Vermonters about methamphetamine during the course of their work – without advertising a "new" drug to Vermonters who may seek new drug experiences (Appendix II).

The initial education project involved collaboration between the Vermont State Police (VSP), the Vermont Criminal Justice Training Council (VCJTC) and the Vermont Department of Health (VDH). Additional sessions were focused on the dangers of methamphetamine and the environmental safety impact that small methamphetamine labs have on individuals and property.

Two initial education sessions were provided to 57 staff and volunteers from local prevention coalitions and 22 Agency of Human Services (AHS) Field Directors and VDH District Directors.

Twenty-four additional statewide sessions were set up by VDH substance abuse prevention consultants and taught by Detective Trooper Mike Smith (VSP) and Cindy Taylor-Patch (VCJTC). When the sessions were completed in the spring of 2006, approximately 976 professionals including first responders, youth workers, alcohol and drug abuse prevention and treatment volunteers/staff, and health care workers were trained.

Following the 2005-2006 educational campaign, the VSP and VCJTC continued to provide the same educational message to community-based professionals throughout 2006. Approximately 2096 Vermonters were trained in these sessions including additional AHS staff (Children & Families and Corrections) and Vermont's first responders (EMS, police, fire).

The VDH Substance Abuse Prevention Consultants also continued to provide a similar educational program in 2006 to community groups such as educators, health care workers, college students and local prevention coalitions. Approximately 438 Vermonters were trained in these sessions.

Methamphetamine Public Information Campaign - 2006

In May, 2006, Governor Jim Douglas signed into law the Vermont Methamphetamine Precursor Act 164 (18 V.S.A. § 4234b), which placed limitations on the sale of over-the-counter precursor drugs containing ephedrine and pseudoephedrine (which are used in methamphetamine production).

This legislation required the Vermont Department of Health to conduct a "publicity and education program to explain the need for change in public access to methamphetamine precursors" and information about methamphetamine itself. The legislation also required the development of a coalition to educate the public and disseminate information about methamphetamine, evaluate current treatment opportunities, and develop recommendations for legislative activity in response to the methamphetamine concern.

The policy advisory coalition established following the summit examines issues about methamphetamine in Vermont. Membership includes the Vermont Department of Health, Vermont Department of Public Safety – State Police, Vermont Department of Corrections, Vermont Department for Children and Families, Vermont Department of Transportation, the Vermont Retail Association, the Vermont Pharmacists Association, the Vermont Attorney General's Office, and representative substance abuse treatment providers. There is a sub-committee of this coalition that focuses on educational issues. This sub-committee will be adding a focus on drug endangered children during 2007.

Working closely with partnering agencies and organizations (law enforcement, retail and grocer associations, and pharmacy associations), the Vermont Department of Health developed educational materials including a poster for employees, a poster for consumers, shelf tags, consumer pamphlets, retailer/pharmacist reference sheets and tear-off handouts for concerned customers.

The Health Department mailed these materials to over 1400 retail and pharmacy outlets in the state. Packets of information were also mailed to approximately 500 partnering organizations including school nurses, prevention coalitions and community-based organizations (Appendix III).

Arrangements were made with Vermont 2-1-1 to handle related calls from the general public. Vermont 2-1-1 is a program supported by the State of Vermont and the United Way of Vermont which provides a toll-free number for Vermonters to get general information about services available in Vermont. The VDH ADAP prevention staff provided training to Vermont 2-1-1 staff about the Vermont and federal methamphetamine precursor laws and methamphetamine in general.

While Vermont 2-1-1 handled calls from the general public, the VDH ADAP prevention staff received the calls from stores and pharmacies. Calls about potential lab sites were directed to the state police (Appendix III).

Staff from the VDH ADAP Prevention Unit held two telephone conference calls with local prevention coalitions to provide technical assistance about community education, possible target audiences for education, use of a PowerPoint presentation developed for coalition use, and an overview of the materials developed for the campaign. ADAP staff answered questions about the exact requirements of the Vermont precursor law and coalitions committed to checking with local retailers to make sure that they received the informational mailing.

Kicking off the public information campaign, Governor Douglas hosted a press conference on September 26, 2006. Barbara Cimaglio, Deputy Commissioner for Alcohol & Drug Abuse Programs and Mike Smith, Vermont State Trooper Detective attended to provide detailed information about methamphetamine in Vermont. Several Vermont papers ran articles to educate the public about the change in purchasing procedures.

The Vermont Department of Health has developed a website of information for retailers and the general public (http://healthvermont.gov/adap/meth/meth.aspx). The site contains educational materials about methamphetamine in general and the retail campaign materials for download and printing.

Evaluation of Treatment Opportunities for Methamphetamine in Vermont

Methamphetamine abuse leads to devastating medical, psychological and social consequences. The good news is that methamphetamine addiction can be successfully treated.

Best practices in the treatment of methamphetamine abuse are very similar to those found in the treatment of other stimulant drugs of abuse such as cocaine. These practices include but are not limited to contingency management techniques as part of an overall treatment program including individual, group, and family therapy.

Counselor training for the treatment of stimulant abuse has been an on-going feature of ADAP training over the past decade. Presenters over the years have included local and national leaders in the treatment of stimulant abuse such as Stephen Higgins, Ph.D. an Associate Professor of Psychiatry and Psychology at the University of Vermont who is recognized internationally for his research in the field of treatment for stimulant disorders. ADAP plans to continue to offer trainings to counselors on best practices for the treatment of stimulant substance use disorders.

At this time, methamphetamine continues to be a very small portion of the drug treatment admissions in Vermont. Vermont must continue its focus on prevention to keep the demand for methamphetamine low and encourage methamphetamine addicts to seek treatment. While lab activity across the U.S. has declined significantly due to legislation limiting the availability of methamphetamine precursor drugs (ephedrine and pseudoephedrine), we have seen an unfortunate increase in the amount of methamphetamine coming from foreign sources such as "super labs" in Mexico.

Recommendations for Legislative Action

Because Vermont is currently experiencing no significant increase in use of methamphetamine and very little associated criminal activity, there are no areas of recommendation for legislative action at this time. We do however, plan to continue our public education efforts in Vermont.

Appendix I

2005 Methamphetamine Summit

January 31, 2006 Summit Sessions

- Topics covered:
  - The Physical and Psychological Effects of Methamphetamine
  - Methamphetamine: A National & Regional Crisis
  - What Vermont Needs and Vermont Solutions
  - Call to Action
- Attendees: 84
  - Elected officials – Sen. Jeffords, Sen. Leahy, Rep. Sanders, Governor Douglas, state legislators
  - Judicial & legal personnel – Supreme Court, Attorney General, Vermont Bar Assoc.
  - Vermont Chamber of Commerce
  - Health care workers (hospital ERs, Vermont Medical Assoc.)
  - Vermont Pharmaceutical Assoc.
  - State employees – (Corrections, Voc. Rehab., VT State Police, Liquor Control, Fish & Wildlife; Children & Families, Education, Health, Mental Health, Agency of Human Services, Agency of Natural Resources)
  - U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration
  - Retailers (Wal-Mart/VT Retail Assoc.)
  - Substance abuse treatment workers
  - Substance abuse prevention workers

February 1, 2005 Summit Session

- Topics covered:

  - Overview of Methamphetamine in Vermont
  - The National Perspective of Methamphetamine
  - Hazardous Waste Sites and Systemic Effects
  - Psychological and Physical Effects of Methamphetamine Use on Adults and Children
  - Drug Endangered Children
  - Methamphetamine Treatment
  - Methamphetamine's Effect on Diverse Systems
  - Next Steps for Vermont
- Attendees: 119
  - State employees (Corrections, Voc. Rehab., VT State Police, Liquor Control, Fish & Wildlife; Children & Families, Education, Health, Mental Health, Agency of Human Services, Agency of Natural Resources, VT Forensic Lab)
  - Legal personnel
  - VT legislators
  - Substance abuse treatment workers
  - Substance abuse prevention workers
  - Health care workers
  - VT Pharmacy Board
  - Retailers (Wal-Mart/VT Retail Assoc.)
  - Youth service workers
  - VT Addiction Professional Assoc.
  - Northeast Kingdom Human Services
  - Law enforcement from 16 VT towns/cities
  - Staff from the offices of Senators Leahy and Jeffords

Appendix II

2005 – 2006 Methamphetamine Professional Education Campaign

VSP, VDH and VCJTC Collaboration: March, 2005 – November, 2005

- Number of presentations = 26
- Attendance = 1055 individuals

VSP and VCJTC Collaboration 2005-2006 Collaboration

- Number of presentations = 100
- Attendance = 2096

VDH 2005-2006

- Number of presentations = 19
- Attendance = 438

TOTAL

- Presentations = 145
- Attendance = 3589

VSP – Vermont State Police
VDH – Vermont Department of Health
VCJTC – Vermont Criminal Justice Training Center

Appendix III

2006 Methamphetamine Public Awareness Campaign

Total Packets Mailed: 1,935

- Coalitions/community organizations = 70
- Partners (includes all school nurses, VDH District Directors, VDH school liaison staff, other state program staff, legislators) = 441
- Pharmacies/retail outlets = 1,424

Percent of mailing returned: 3.4%

- Return numbers (total = 67):
  - Pharmacies: 59 (outdated list from Sec. State Office)
  - Retail outlets: 5
  - Community-based organizations/partners: 3
- Number re-mailed = 15

Calls Received:

- VDH-ADAP:
  - Retail/pharmacy = 17
  - Press = 2
  - Schools = 2
  - General public = 0
- Vermont State Police
  - Suspected methamphetamine lab calls = 10
- Vermont 2-1-1:
  - Retail = 1
  - General public = 3