

# The Methamphetamine Paradox

Addressing Methamphetamine  
Prevention in Conjunction with  
Alcohol and Other Drugs

Minnesota Department of Health

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# Which is the Worst Drug?

Methamphetamine

Alcohol

Crack Cocaine

Heroin or...

# Does it Really Matter?

- They are all used and abused.
- They all cause problems.
- There will always be some people seeking to alter their moods or medicate themselves.
- We need to address them all.

**A drug is a drug is a drug!**

# The Methamphetamine Paradox

On one hand:

Methamphetamine generates a large amount of attention and concern

- Vast media coverage
- A lot of law enforcement energy
- Criminal behavior related to its use

# The Methamphetamine Paradox

On the other hand:

Most local, state and national surveys show low percentages of people using the drug.

- About 4-5 percent of people report using it.
- Trends do not seem to show increases in the number of people who report using it.

Sources: 2004 Minnesota Student Survey, 2005 National Survey of Drug Use and Health, 2005 Monitoring the Future Survey

# The Methamphetamine Paradox

As a result:

Many do not believe the data from surveys.

- It does not fit with their perception of use of the drug.

- Therefore they determine the surveys must be wrong.

# The Methamphetamine Paradox

It may be because we use percentages instead of numbers.

- Small percentages mean minimal problems to some people.
- We need to use numbers in these cases.

Using numbers will help convey the extent of the problem without raising doubts about the data.

# The Methamphetamine Paradox

Example using 5% usage rate:

Mock Duck County, population 10,000

(5% of 10,000 = 500)

- An estimated 500 methamphetamine users who are taking a toll on the county in:
  - Crime
  - Drug dealing
  - Quality of life (fear)
  - Child protection
  - Lab cleanup

# The Methamphetamine Paradox

Mock Duck County United School District with  
1200 students in grades 9-12 (5% of 1200 = 60)

- An estimated 60 methamphetamine using students who are taking a toll on:
    - Teachers
    - Administrators
    - Support staff
    - Law enforcement
- As well as the rest of the students

# The Methamphetamine Paradox

Many alcoholics have enablers who try to keep them out of trouble by:

- Providing rides so they don't drive
- Trying to make them comfortable
- Making excuses for them with family, friends, employers, etc.

# The Methamphetamine Paradox

Users of alcohol and other depressants may pass out or fall asleep after getting high.

Most other stimulants have a high that is much shorter in duration than methamphetamine.

As a result, many alcohol and other drug abusers often do not end up interacting with law enforcement, social services, the judicial system and corrections.

# The Methamphetamine Paradox

Methamphetamine users may be:

- Up for days at a time
- Paranoid
- Violent
- Hallucinating

They seldom have enablers to take care of them.

They become more visible and problematic for law enforcement, social services, etc.

# **Preventing Methamphetamine, Alcohol or Other Drug Abuse**

Research clearly supports using a comprehensive approach.

Components of a comprehensive approach:

1. Education and awareness with consistent messages delivered to a variety of audiences from varying messengers,
2. Developing and enforcing policies, and
3. Impacting community norms.

# Comprehensive Approach

For an example of a comprehensive approach for alcohol abuse prevention go to:

**[www.health.state.mn.us/alcohol](http://www.health.state.mn.us/alcohol)** and click on

“A Community-based Primary Prevention Plan to Reduce High Risk and Underage Alcohol Use”

-Many of the strategies may be adapted for methamphetamine and other drug abuse prevention

Examples of methamphetamine policies can be found at:

**[www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/meth/ordinance/index.html](http://www.health.state.mn.us/divs/eh/meth/ordinance/index.html)**