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NF04-608 Fighting Methamphetamine in Nebraska: Strategies for Individuals and Communities

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Fighting Methamphetamine in Nebraska: Strategies for Individuals and Communities

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Below are a few ideas to help protect your family, neighbors and community from dangers associated with methamphetamine (commonly called meth). You can implement these ideas as an individual, as part of a community plan, or develop your own strategies. The goal is not simply to educate your family on the hazards of using meth, but also to help protect them from the many other hazards posed by meth use and production.

The steps for planning the strategies are:

1. Assess the situation.
2. Identify priorities.
3. Develop a plan.
4. Implement the plans.
5. Evaluate and reassess the situation.

Review each step. Mark what you can do or are willing to do. Then write a plan and put it into action.

Step I — Assess the situation in your own life and community:

- _____ Be a good role model.
- Do you drink frequently or excessively?
 - Do you ride with a driver who has been drinking?
 - Do you drive after drinking?
 - Do you tolerate underage drinking in your home and community?
 - Do you supply alcohol to minors?
 - Do you overuse prescribed medications?
 - Do you use tobacco?
 - Do you use illegal drugs?

- _____ Educate yourself about meth.
- _____ Educate yourself about meth labs.
- _____ Learn about your community.
- How prevalent is drinking?
 - How prevalent is teen drinking?
 - How prevalent is smoking among youth and adults?
 - How prevalent is other drug use?
 - What law enforcement strategies are in place?
 - What alcohol and other drug-related programs are aimed toward youth (schools, churches, youth groups, etc.)?
 - What alcohol and other drug treatment and rehabilitation is available?
 - What organizations address the meth issue?
- _____ Other:

Step II — Identify the priorities that need to be addressed from your assessments. As you set priorities, engage all segments of your community, including people of all ages, gender, and race, as well as public and private groups.

Step III—Develop a work/action plan using some of the strategies listed below, or determine your own strategies to fit your individual or community needs.

_____ Join a mentoring program or mentor a child on your own.

_____ Become involved in parenting programs.

_____ Encourage family-focused events in your community.

_____ Become involved and work with other community programs such as:

- Nebraska Resource Conservation and Development;
- civic clubs; or
- community task forces/coalitions.

_____ Hold a neighborhood meeting to discuss what can be done in your neighborhood and invite law enforcement.

_____ Form a watch group(s) (such as a neighborhood watch, farm watch, community watch, house watch). For more information, visit these Web sites:

- http://www.usaonwatch.org/resource/Neighborhood_Watch/publications.aspx
- http://www.oag.state.ny.us/crime/neighborhood_watch/neighborhood_watch_toc.html

_____ Create walking or driving patrols.

- Develop a notification process to report illegal activities.
- Develop a handout with local contact numbers for reporting suspicious activities.

_____ Record suspicious activities. (Consider using a reporting sheet from Nebraska State Patrol or develop one of your own.) Record location, date, time, style/make of car, color/year of car, and license plate number.

_____ Report suspicious activities to local law enforcement or Nebraska State Patrol.

_____ Educate policy makers on the dangers and pitfalls of meth, and encourage legislation dealing with laws and policies related to the meth issue.

_____ Encourage educational meetings related to one or more of the following topics:

Agriculture

- Anhydrous theft (tank lock security devices and tamper tags)
- Abandoned farmsteads
- Agriculture supplies and equipment

Roadside clean-up

- Health hazards
- Suspicious materials

Retailers

- Product management and reporting suspicious activity

Public service (sanitation workers, road crews, utility workers, farmers, county health departments, health and human service personnel and others who might be affected)

- Potential health hazards related to meth production labs
- Potential for violence of people under the influence of meth

Schools (faculty and staff)

- Symptoms of meth use
- Dangers of meth use
- Potential for violence of meth users

Youth organizations (4-H, Scouts, churches, schools)

- Meth facts
- Dangers of meth use
- Potential for violence of meth users

Landlords/Real Estate

- Signs of suspicious activity
- Property clean-up
- Abandoned property

Medical (medical community, first responders, law enforcement)

- Potential for violence when working with people who are under the influence of meth
- Intervention protocol and care of children exposed to meth labs

_____ Conduct a community meth awareness forum. Encourage youth and parents to attend.

_____ Hold a community drug action meeting (can be as simple or complex as you would like). Consider inviting:

- Local business owners
- Law enforcement
- Civic and social leaders
- School personnel
- Ministerial association
- Agencies — local and state
- Elected officials
- University of Nebraska Extension personnel
- Judicial personnel
- Alcohol and abuse counselors

_____ Start a local coalition if not in place.

_____ Create a community speakers bureau.

_____ Develop a community education and awareness campaign.

- Involve local media.
- Distribute educational materials.
- Show facts about meth at local movie theaters.
- Develop signage for meth awareness.
- Produce public service announcements.
- Create display and bulletin boards.
- Set up booths and distribute materials at county fairs, health fairs, etc.
- Plan and implement a meth awareness day.
- Conduct anti-meth slogan contests for school children based on grades.

_____ Other

Step IV — Implement the plans

In order to implement many of the above strategies, additional resources may be needed. Local law enforcement, health and human services offices, drug and alcohol counselors, plus many others can serve as valuable and reliable resources.

Design steps and a timeline for completing the plan. (What are you going to do and when will you have it finished?)

Step V — Evaluate and reassess the situation

Ask yourself or your community group the following questions:

1. What are we doing right and need to keep doing or do better?

2. What are we not doing that we should be doing?

3. What are we doing that we should not be doing?

By educating yourself about the hazards of meth, you have already taken the first step in your fight against meth in your community. Remember YOU are the most important part of your community's fight for safety. It's time to take back our communities. It's time for you to get involved.

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