

"Meth raid can help get kids to safer sites; State police have seized 67 of them"

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The Illinois State Police Meth Response Team has seized more than methamphetamine in its 250 or so raids on metro-east labs since May 2005 -- it also has seized 47 children.

"These children are often neglected," Team supervisor Sgt. Joe Beliveau said. They have ranged in age from a few months to 17 years.

On Tuesday, 50 care packages and backpacks were donated to the Illinois State Police to provide troopers with something to give the children removed from raided meth labs.

The care packages include clothing, basic toiletries, a snack, a comfort item such as a toy or a teddy bear, along with resources for the caregiver. For the younger children, formula, diapers and baby wipes also are included.

"All agents are carrying the backpacks in their vehicles so they have them when they respond to the meth lab," Beliveau said.

The care packages were donated by Metro East Coalition Against Methamphetamine, which has partnered with local organizations to address the ongoing issue of meth in Illinois.

When the children are taken from the home, they are not allowed to bring anything with them because it likely would be contaminated with the toxic chemicals used to produce meth, Lisa Durzo of Children's Home and Aid Society of Illinois said.

"While new laws have reduced the number of clandestine labs in Illinois, we need to maintain our efforts to further reduce the tragic impact of meth addiction on our communities," said Connie Laurie of Chestnut Health Services. "The MECAM's mission is to empower communities to address the impact of methamphetamine through education, advocacy and resource development."

All the backpacks, bags and items for the care packages were donated by MECAM, State Farm Insurance Co., Madison County Mental Health, area healthcare providers and through a Madison County Government Employees Donation Drive.