

ILLINOIS METH PROJECT

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

Springfield, Illinois—February 4, 2009—A RAND Corporation study released today, “The Economic Cost of Methamphetamine Use in the United States,” estimates the national cost of Meth use is \$23.4 billion. The study represents the first time that a comprehensive assessment of the annual costs of methamphetamine abuse has been analyzed on a national scale.

The RAND study found that methamphetamine imposes a significant and disproportionate burden on both individuals and society through dollars spent on treatment, healthcare, and social services, as well as the costs of crime and lost productivity associated with the drug.

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 costs associated with Meth use each year. These costs are significant in Illinois, where the U.S. Department of Justice reports that the state ranks #4 in the country for Meth-related arrestsⁱ and for Meth lab seizures.ⁱⁱ The Justice Department also found that methamphetamine is the primary drug threat to Central and Southern Illinois and is increasing in prevalence in the Chicago area.ⁱⁱⁱ

“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.”

“For years, methamphetamine use has been plaguing communities in Illinois and throughout the nation. We now know it’s costing us at least \$23.4 billion a year,” said Ralph Weisheit, Distinguished Professor Criminal Justice at Illinois State University. “These findings highlight the need for research-based prevention programs, such as the Illinois Meth Project, that can help reduce Meth abuse and curb future costs to society.”

“The Illinois Meth Project’s proactive approach in educating Central Illinois teens about the dangers of Meth has a measurable impact in the law enforcement community,” said Larry Trent, Director of the Illinois State Police. “In order to reduce the time police officers dedicate to Meth-related crimes, we need to further increase education and awareness efforts.”

Launched in Central Illinois last year, the Illinois Meth Project is a large-scale research-based prevention program aimed at reducing Meth use through public service messaging, public policy and community outreach. It is modeled after successful campaigns in Montana and Arizona, where Meth use among teens has declined by 45% in each state.^{iv}

At the core of the Illinois Meth Project's effort is research-validated, high-impact advertising that graphically communicates the risks of Meth use. The Project focuses its efforts on reaching teens and young adults in rural Illinois because an estimated 53% of people in treatment for methamphetamine in Illinois began using at age 18 or younger,^v and rural admissions from Meth-related treatment are five times higher than the state average.^{vi} Reducing Meth use in Illinois could save millions of dollars spent on social services and healthcare provided to dependent users each year.

“The Illinois Meth Project’s messages help dispel the misconceptions teens have about Meth and show the very real destruction that comes with trying this highly addictive drug,” said Wendy Bailie, Director of Substance Abuse Services at Franklin-Williamson Human Services, which treats patients addicted to

methamphetamine or other drugs at rehabilitation centers in Southern Illinois. “Prevention initiatives such as the Illinois Meth Project, like drug treatment programs, are cost-saving strategies in the fight against the devastating effects of methamphetamine. Just as every dollar spent on treatment saves \$7 in other societal costs, it is estimated that every dollar spent on prevention saves \$10 in other costs to society.”

The Illinois Project recently released results from the 2008 *Illinois Meth Use & Attitudes Survey*, a targeted survey examining the attitudes that Central Illinois teens have toward methamphetamine. The results showed that since the Illinois Meth Project began last year, more teens in Central Illinois view Meth use as dangerous and they are more aware of the specific, negative effects of trying the drug.^{vii} Based on the success of the advertising, a second wave of new ads was released by the Illinois Meth Project on January 5.

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

About the Illinois Meth Project

The Illinois Meth Project is a non-profit organization that implements a range of advertising and community action programs to reduce methamphetamine use. Launched in February 2008, the Illinois Meth Project leverages a proven model that combines extensive research with a hard-hitting, integrated media campaign. The Illinois Meth Project is established by the Meth Project, a national non-profit organization headquartered in Palo Alto, California, aimed at significantly reducing Meth use through public service messaging, public policy, and community outreach. The Meth Project is a project of the Thomas and Stacey Siebel Foundation. For more information, visit www.illinoismethproject.org.

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ⁱ Department of Justice, Drug Enforcement Administration Data, Illinois. “Compiled Rankings of State Methamphetamine Arrests/Seizures from 2004 DEA Data.” 2004.

ⁱⁱ Department of Justice. National Clandestine Laboratory Seizure System & Drug Enforcement Administration Data. 2007.

ⁱⁱⁱ United States Department of Justice. “DEA Fact Sheet: Illinois.” 2008.

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

^v United States Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA), Drug and Alcohol Services Information System (DASIS), “Treatment Episode Data Set (TEDS).” 2006.

^{vi} National Association of Counties. “The Meth Epidemic in America – Two Surveys of U.S. Counties: The Criminal Effect of Meth on Communities & The Impact of Meth on Children.” July 2005.

^{vii} Illinois Meth Project. “Meth Use & Attitudes Survey 2008: Springfield, Decatur, and Champaign Regions.” January 2008. (www.illinoismethproject.org).