



# **Michigan Methamphetamine Control Strategy**

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## Michigan Methamphetamine Control Strategy

### Introduction

Methamphetamine is a dangerous and highly addictive illegal drug that has devastated hundreds of thousands of lives around the nation — and its threat is growing rapidly. It has quietly become America's first major homegrown drug epidemic. In many ways, methamphetamine is the crack cocaine of the new millennium. Much like crack cocaine use, which swept across the nation in the 1980s and '90s, methamphetamine use has hit epidemic proportions recently in nearby states.

We are at a threshold in Michigan. The methamphetamine culture — a culture that includes both use and manufacture of methamphetamine — has not reached epidemic proportions in our state. To avoid a crisis, Michigan is actively working on increasing collaboration and planning among several stakeholder groups, including the education, prevention, retail, law enforcement and criminal justice, farming, environmental and treatment communities — as well as the media.

In March 2002, the Michigan Department of Community Health, Office of Drug Control Policy (ODCP) convened leaders from various disciplines across the state to further develop a statewide strategy aimed at attacking methamphetamine use and production, while heightening our responses in enforcement, prevention, the environment and treatment.

Michigan's plan, a comprehensive and unified statewide strategy that builds on the anti-drug victories we have already achieved, is the vehicle by which we can turn the corner and measurably reduce and eliminate the threat of this dangerous and highly addictive drug.

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### **Methamphetamine Culture: Always Harmful, Often Deadly**

#### What is methamphetamine?

Methamphetamine (meth) is a powerful, addictive stimulant that is manufactured from common household chemicals in clandestine laboratories throughout the United States. Methamphetamine can be ingested by swallowing, inhaling, injecting or smoking. The typical high lasts 12 hours or longer and some users will stay high for days. Side effects from use include irritability, nervousness, insomnia, nausea, depression and brain damage. Street names, or slang terms, for methamphetamine are: speed, ice, chalk, meth, crystal, fire and glass.

As stated above, methamphetamine is manufactured in clandestine laboratories. As defined by the National Clandestine Lab Seizure System at the El Paso Intelligence Center (EPIC), a clandestine lab is "an illicit operation consisting of a sufficient combination of apparatus and chemicals that either has been or could be used in the manufacture or synthesis of controlled substances." Simply put, these illicit makeshift laboratories can be set up virtually anywhere.

### **Meth manufacturing is dangerous and poses environmental risks**

*Labs are often filthy, dangerous places soaked with toxic chemicals and strewn with garbage and addicts' used needles. Due to effects of the drug, such as paranoia and extreme sexual urges, there are often guns and pornography found at lab sites.*

Amateurs can easily produce or "cook" meth using precursor ingredients that are legally purchased or easily stolen. The raw materials are inexpensive: eighty dollars spent at a pharmacy and hardware store can buy ingredients for an ounce of meth worth up to \$1,000. There are several production methods, but since 2001, all meth labs found by the Michigan State Police (MSP) have used a manufacturing process called the "ephedrine reduction method." This involves extracting pseudoephedrine or ephedrine from cold tablets. Other ingredients used in this process include lithium metal strips that are torn out of batteries and anhydrous ammonia, which is usually stolen from fertilizer tanks in farmers' fields or agricultural storage facilities. Other production methods include using ingredients such as iodine crystals and the red phosphorous from striker plates of matchbooks.

Methamphetamine production is often a crude process. A clandestine laboratory operator can use relatively common items such as mason jars, coffee filters, hot plates, pressure cookers, pillowcases, plastic tubing and gas cans to substitute for more sophisticated equipment.

Methamphetamine production is very dangerous. The chemicals used in methamphetamine production can be hazardous. Solvents and fumes from meth labs are flammable, and explosives and gases formed in the meth manufacturing process can cause disfiguring injury, serious health problems or death from inhalation. Labs are often filthy, dangerous places soaked with toxic chemicals and strewn with garbage and addicts' used needles. Due to effects of the drug, such as paranoia and extreme sexual urges, there are often guns and pornography found at lab sites.

Methamphetamine operations also produce highly toxic waste, which can pollute dwellings, water supplies and soil. This waste includes corrosive liquids, acid vapors, heavy metals, solvents and other harmful materials. Laboratories produce five to six pounds of toxic waste for every pound of methamphetamine produced. Lab operators almost always dump this waste illegally in ways that severely damage the environment.<sup>1</sup>

Meth is growing exponentially more popular in rural locations because labs and their noxious fumes are not easily detected. Internet access to methamphetamine recipes, along with increased demand for high-purity product, has resulted in a dramatic increase in the number of mom-and-pop laboratories nationwide<sup>2</sup>. The average producer is a

1. Drug Enforcement Administration, Methamphetamine Fact Sheet

2. Drug Enforcement Administration, Briefs & Background, Drugs and Drug Abuse, Drug Descriptions, Amphetamines/Methamphetamine

small-time operator with a dangerous, poorly constructed lab that can be stashed anywhere from mobile homes to car trunks. Large-scale manufacturers include those in Mexico run by organized crime and "superlabs" in the western United States. Labs found in Michigan thus far tend to be small, personal-use operations capable of producing no more than a few ounces in a single cook.



## **America's First Major Homegrown Drug Epidemic**

- In 1999, more than a million Americans used meth in just one year, more than used crack and almost three times as many as used heroin.
- According to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), approximately 8,000 clandestine methamphetamine laboratories nationwide were seized and reported to the National Clandestine Laboratory Database at EPIC in 2001.
- While most other illicit drugs are imported into the United States, meth is most often produced and sold locally.
- Congress passed the Methamphetamine Control Act of 1996, which toughened drug sentences and targeted drug supplies by attempting to stem the availability of ingredients such as ephedrine.

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## **Michigan's neighbors have been hit hard**

Startling news stories about methamphetamine have been reported in other Midwestern and Western states. We should keep these reports from other states in mind as we target resources to meth education and prevention here in Michigan.

- The U.S. attorney in Nebraska reports that 80 percent of his drug cases now involve meth.
- There were more arrests in Spokane County, Wash., for meth during 1999 than for cocaine, crack, and heroin combined. Meth is found through urine tests in nearly 20 percent of new Spokane County Jail inmates, more often than any hard drug and twice as often as heroin. The number of Spokane County meth addicts treated in publicly funded clinics rose nearly 2,200 percent between 1993 and 1999, from 22 to 503.
- In Idaho, nine out of 10 drug cases handled by state police are meth-related. Nearly half of the drug treatment in northern Idaho is for meth.
- Iowa authorities uncovered two meth labs in 1994; by 1999, they found 803. Fourteen percent of the people arrested for any crime in Des Moines in 1999 tested positive for meth.

## Social costs

**Child welfare** When children are found at a clandestine laboratory scene, law enforcement officers must consider issues such as the need for physical examinations, involvement of child protection agencies, and documentation of child endangerment. Kids pulled from meth homes are often sick, both mentally and physically. They lose their belongings and their sense of security, and they fill foster homes. Juvenile court staff estimate that nearly half of the 1,100 Spokane County, Wash., children in temporary state custody are there because of parents involved in methamphetamine.

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**Treatment** Meth addiction is difficult and expensive to treat. Research indicates that users may abuse the drug for a much longer period before entering treatment than persons abusing most other drugs, and once sought, medical and mental health staff may be inadequately trained to recognize and deliver effective methamphetamine-relevant treatment interventions.

**Medical and mental impact** Meth users experience major medical problems — from alarming weight and tooth loss to skin infections and abscesses from poor hygiene. Users suffer mental problems, including paranoia and depression. Addicts may develop meth psychosis, which requires several days of acute detox. Even two binges can scorch the pleasure center of the brain, causing lifelong depression.



While Michigan is not experiencing the devastation present in other states, we must be aware of the definite signs of a rapidly growing methamphetamine problem. Our task is to arrest the trend and continue building safe and drug-free communities in Michigan.

Prior to 1996, it is believed that most methamphetamine in Michigan was shipped from California and other Western states, with outlaw motorcycle gangs controlling the trafficking. In 1996, six labs were found and investigated in Michigan. In 2001, law enforcement seized 120 methamphetamine labs. Already in 2002, 102 labs have been seized (as of June 18, a halfway point or six month mark). Based on the 102 labs seized already in 2002, this year's lab seizures are projected to be more than 200 percent higher than last year.

The majority of the labs have been found in the southwest corner of the state, specifically Allegan, Van Buren, St. Joseph, and Cass counties (see Figure 1). Meth is the number one drug problem in southwest Michigan. However, an increasing number of labs are being found in the mid-Michigan area. This movement follows the same trend in meth activity across the United States, beginning in the southwest and moving toward the east.





## Training official personnel

- In September 2001, MSP personnel completed 40 hours of training to become certified as clandestine laboratory personnel.
- Southeast Michigan High Intensity Drug Trafficking Area (HIDTA) funded training and equipment for 50 meth lab first responders. Thirty-six responders were trained in May 2002 and the remaining are to be trained by September 30, 2002. Currently there are 91 certified clandestine lab responders in Michigan.
- MSP training academy has added two hours of instruction to the recruit school curriculum, and MSP first aid instructors received a three-hour block of instruction on methamphetamine. The Michigan Commission on Law Enforcement Standards (MCOLES) regional training centers are incorporating clandestine laboratory awareness training in their basic police training academies.
- The MSP Criminal Investigation Division has instructed 40 personnel from the Fire Fighters Training Council. They completed a train-the-trainer course on methamphetamine awareness and in turn will instruct a four-hour methamphetamine awareness course to approximately 31,500 Michigan fire fighters and approximately 30,000 emergency medical service personnel statewide.
- All MSP narcotic task force section and unit commanders received train-the-trainer instruction and have instructed approximately 4,000 individuals, including law enforcement, agriculture, and health care professionals in a methamphetamine awareness course.

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## Providing information and help to communities

- In January of 2001, MSP established a toll-free Meth Tip Line (1-866-METH-TIP) which is available to the public to report methamphetamine activities.
- Public information packets were distributed to all MSP posts so personnel can visit local retail and hotel/motel businesses for the purpose of advancing anti-methamphetamine awareness.
- Safety Alert, a clandestine lab bulletin, has been mailed to several thousand individuals in the public safety community.
- An extensive marketing and awareness campaign has been conducted through farmers and agri-business to inform them about the dangers of meth and one of its primary ingredients - anhydrous ammonia.
- ODCP funded a \$45,000 initiative to produce 2,000 videotapes on methamphetamine awareness. The video was distributed to every police and fire department in the state.
- ODCP provided \$25,000 for anhydrous ammonia tank locks. These locks will be distributed to dealers and farmers in Allegan and Van

Buren counties, where the methamphetamine problem is more alarming than anywhere else in the state.

- A methamphetamine awareness campaign was developed to solicit funds from the private and public sectors for billboards, anhydrous tank stickers and radio announcements. Anhydrous tank stickers were distributed to anhydrous ammonia dealers at an agricultural show in January 2002.
- On March 12, 2002, the ODCP hosted a multidisciplinary methamphetamine summit in Grand Rapids. Work groups discussed strategies to deal with Michigan's growing meth problem.

### **Beefing up law enforcement efforts**

- June 2002, HIDTA awarded a \$250,000 grant for methamphetamine enforcement in southwest Michigan.
- MSP created the Methamphetamine Response Team, with many of the officers receiving training from the DEA.
- The Precursor Chemical Group, a multi-agency task force partially funded through HIDTA and under the administration and procedural control of the DEA, will target the importation and distribution of pseudoephedrine.
- Michigan has passed legislation that increases penalties for methamphetamine related charges. These laws took effect January 1, 2001.
- As part of Operation Mountain Express, from April 2001 through April 2002, the U.S. Customs Service (together with the DEA, Internal Revenue Service, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police) seized 150 million pseudoephedrine tablets that were being smuggled into the United States from Canada at the Michigan-Ontario border. This pseudoephedrine was destined for methamphetamine manufacturers in the Western part of the United States. This amount of pseudoephedrine would yield approximately 17,820 pounds of methamphetamine, with a wholesale value of approximately \$9,000 per pound, or \$160 million, and a corresponding street value of \$640 million.
- On June 15, 2002, U.S. Customs Service inspectors seized more than \$21 million worth of pseudoephedrine being smuggled into Port Huron from Canada.
- DEA Detroit Enforcement Group 2 is designated as the Clandestine Laboratory Enforcement Team (CLET) for the Detroit Field Division. CLET is tasked with the investigation of, the execution of search warrants on, and the dismantling of clandestine labs within the field division. Due to the exponential increase in lab seizures throughout Michigan, many state and local officers are assisting with this multijurisdictional effort.

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## Multijurisdictional drug task forces

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Two of Michigan's drug task forces are positioned in the center of the methamphetamine problem and have dealt with the bulk of lab seizures since 1998. The Southwest Enforcement Team (SWET) includes Cass, Barry, Van Buren, Kalamazoo, Calhoun, Branch and St. Joseph Counties. The West Michigan Enforcement Team (WEMET) services Muskegon, Allegan, and Ottawa Counties. In addition, a temporary Allegan County Methamphetamine Task Force was established by local, state and federal law enforcement officials in February 2002 due to the large number of methamphetamine labs and abundant criminal activity in that area. This task force was disbanded at the end of April 2002 after much success, and a corresponding readjustment of strategy.

ODCP has made a commitment to enhancing the operations of the task forces, and will take necessary action to assist them in fighting the methamphetamine problem in Michigan.

## Reaching out to all affected individuals

In addition to the law enforcement efforts, authorities also gained community and private sector support and awareness through educational programs with retailers, farmers, and state and federal agency field workers. As a result of these educational efforts, many retailers in Allegan County now report people buying excessive pseudoephedrine-based products, one of the main ingredients in producing methamphetamine.



Although much work has already been accomplished in Michigan, we still face many challenges. Our three overarching goals are:

- to leverage resources through a multidisciplinary approach;
- to initiate and maintain problem-solving and networking relationships with other jurisdictions to learn best practices and strategies; and
- to strengthen partnerships among everyone involved to increase our capacity to fight methamphetamine on all fronts.

Prevention and education, treatment and rehabilitation, and law enforcement all play an essential role in our ability to continuously fine-tune an appropriate response to the many problems associated with methamphetamine use and production. To that end, protocol must be identified to deal with methamphetamine clean-up issues, and better responses must be identified and coordinated so that potentially hazardous risks to the community and the environment are lessened or averted. Training and education must be developed and communicated so that the entire state is unified in responding to and combating the dangers of methamphetamine production and consumption. Legislative changes can create and enforce stricter penalties for methamphetamine production and possession, for possession of precursor chemicals, and for the related social and environmental consequences. The treatment community needs to be educated about the issues surrounding methamphetamine addiction — and how to best treat those addicted to meth. Finally, effective engagement of the media is a critical strategy that must be woven throughout every goal and recommendation to help the public understand the issues and encourage people to lend their support when and where appropriate.

Michigan's methamphetamine statewide strategy has six areas of focus: (1) law enforcement; (2) environmental; (3) media and public awareness, including training and education; (4) prevention and treatment; (5) prosecutorial and judicial; and (6) retail. Methamphetamine action teams are being organized to continue work on the associated goals and objectives. Specific goals have already been identified by representatives in each focus area.

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### **Law enforcement goals**

- Make anhydrous ammonia unavailable for the production of methamphetamine.
- Train law enforcement and other communities affected by methamphetamine, including methamphetamine recognition and proper situational procedures.
- Provide overtime as needed to deal with methamphetamine investigation and clean-up.
- Work closely with prosecutors and judges to hold offenders accountable.
- Use the methamphetamine tip line (1-866-METH-TIP) as a way to engage the public.
- Encourage regional and international cooperation in health, safety and enforcement arenas.

### **Environmental goals**

- Conduct a pilot study to determine the environmental impact of methamphetamine labs.

*Congress passed the Methamphetamine Control Act of 1996, which toughened drug sentences and targeted drug supplies by attempting to stem the availability of ingredients such as ephedrine.*

- Determine the clean-up issues both inside and outside of a methamphetamine lab.
- Review the Michigan Health Code to determine if there are rules to target property owners for clandestine lab cleanup.
- Direct and coordinate existing laws and authority into remediation of methamphetamine labs; develop a standard for enforcement of remediation guidelines.
- Develop a notification system for environmental and local health agency personnel.

### Media and public awareness goals

- Educate Michigan citizens about the dangers of methamphetamine through press conferences, press releases, public service announcements and advertisement campaigns in the public and private sector.
- Promote awareness of methamphetamine issues across disciplines, in a variety of user-friendly settings, for health, social service, law enforcement and other professionals.
- Identify problem areas in Michigan and flood them with anti-meth messages.
- Identify target markets and the best medium to communicate information and awareness to those markets.
- Maintain visibility of methamphetamine action team activities and policy goals through high levels of media advocacy.
- Construct a statewide methamphetamine website to provide current information and resources to community groups, law enforcement, merchants, farmers and other organizations.

### Prevention and treatment goals

- Establish baseline data on the extent of the methamphetamine problem in Michigan, including ancillary data such as child abuse and neglect due to methamphetamine use by caretakers.
- Increase awareness of methamphetamine prevention and treatment issues.
- Learn more about effective interventions and establish appropriate treatment protocol for methamphetamine usage and addiction.
- Enhance current treatment options to include specialized treatment for methamphetamine usage and addiction.
- Ensure adequate access to specialized treatment.
- Establish an early warning system for communities to recognize an

emerging methamphetamine problem, including use of other amphetamines.

### Prosecution and judicial goals

- Increase penalties and address inadequacies in current state statutes with respect to both precursor chemicals and methamphetamine manufacture.
- Review sentencing guidelines to appropriately enhance penalties.
- Increase the education and awareness of the methamphetamine problem for judges, prosecutors, and probation and parole officers.
- Establish a protocol for consistency of evidence collection, preservation and testing.

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### Retail goals

- Identify patterns and practices of methamphetamine cooks and users as they relate to retail experiences and make that information available to retailers.
- Establish better communication within retail industry.
- Flag products that can be used for the production of methamphetamine through UPC and identifiers.
- Enforce stricter control and higher penalties for possession of anhydrous ammonia outside of its intended purposes.
- Determine and enhance liability against meth producers for the theft and use of anhydrous ammonia.
- Promote better identification of anhydrous tanks.
- Work in conjunction with law enforcement to reduce and eliminate production of methamphetamine.
- Provide information to hotel and motel owners and employees.



By anticipating our challenges, Michigan is a step ahead in its effort to impede the growth of the methamphetamine problem in our state. The key to accomplishing our drug prevention and intervention goals is to foster collaboration among various agencies and other groups concerned with the meth problem, and to remain committed to the good fight for a safe and drug-free Michigan.



## Acknowledgements

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### A Coordinated Strategy Presented by

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Michigan Department of State Police

Michigan Department of Environmental Quality

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Michigan's Regional Substance Abuse Coordinating Agencies

Michigan's Safe and Drug Free Schools Coordinators

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U.S. Customs Service

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