

Methamphetamine Use and Abuse

Defining the Issue

Methamphetamine (meth) is easily manufactured which is one of the major contributing factors to the increase in its use. Large manufacturing operations, commonly referred to as “super labs,” are prevalent throughout certain regions of Mexico, California and in a number of other states. More common, however, are smaller clandestine or mobile labs.

Clandestine labs are usually operated on an irregular basis. Manufacturers typically produce a batch of finished product, disassemble the lab, and either store or move the lab to another location while they acquire additional chemicals. Relocating the lab affords some protection against detection by law enforcement officers.

Over the past decade, cooperative efforts by law enforcement agencies and chemical suppliers have made it more difficult for meth manufacturers to obtain the necessary chemicals. In order to circumvent these joint efforts, manufacturers have sought alternative chemicals, routes of synthesis and sources of supply to fulfill their needs. They have learned how to compound and manufacture their own chemicals, employed “runners” (also commonly referred to as “smurfs” or “smurfing”) to purchase necessary chemicals under the threshold amount (the amount at which record-keeping and reporting of chemical transactions are required), or experimented with alternative, non-regulated chemicals. In addition, they obtain chemicals from rogue chemical companies, from sources of supply located in states without strict chemical regulations and/or from other countries.

According to the 2005 *National Survey on Drug Use and Health*, 10.4 million Americans age 12 and older had tried methamphetamine at least once in their lifetimes. Young adults aged 18 to 25 were more likely to use meth in the past year than youths aged 12 or 17 or adults aged 26 or older. Comprehensive community-based programs that address education and prevention, measures to impact the source and manufacture of methamphetamine, resources for law enforcement and rehabilitation and recovery options for methamphetamine users have shown to provide the greatest opportunities for success.

State Examples

Iowa - Iowa used Byrne/JAG funding to address meth prevention, treatment and enforcement. These task forces serve three-quarters of the state and provide front line protection against methamphetamine. Multi-jurisdictional task forces in Iowa seized 61.1 kilograms of methamphetamine in SFY 2007 with an estimated street value of nearly \$8 million. The also responded to 363 clandestine meth labs. A variety of treatment and rehabilitation projects have been supported through the Byrne program, including drug courts, jail and prison-based treatment, and an award winning community-based dual diagnosis treatment program. While these projects were not designed specifically for methamphetamine offenders, the majority of clients involved in the programs are meth abusers.



Photo originally appeared in the online magazine *Slate*

Alabama - Byrne/JAG dollars allowed law enforcement to fund task forces that seized 371 methamphetamine laboratories. The grant also allowed law enforcement officers to train others on how to shut down methamphetamine producing facilities.

Michigan - In Michigan Byrne/JAG funds allowed for the seizure of more methamphetamine labs than in previous years. In addition, the state was able to create the Allegan County Methamphetamine Diversion Program whose primary purpose is to decrease recidivism of people addicted to meth.

West Virginia- JAG funds currently support 15 task forces totaling 52 fulltime positions and 48 overtime positions. In 2006, they conducted 234 meth investigations, made 198 meth related arrests, seized 115 labs involving 19 minors, and seized 5,269.20 grams of methamphetamine.

Montana- Multi-jurisdictional Drug Taskforces have played a major role in identifying and dismantling clandestine meth labs. As a result of these efforts Montana has seen a significant decrease in the number of labs from over 120 labs in 2002 to less than 10 in 2006. The MJDTFs drug reduction efforts in Montana have been coupled with community based awareness programs, community mobilization (Montana Meth Watch), and merchant education.