

Survey: Some teens find meth easy to get

September 18, 2007

By SAM HANANEL - Associated Press Writer



Meth Project, John Harrington

This photo provided by the Meth Project, shows Meth Project Chairman and Founder Thomas Siebel testifying on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, sept. 18, 2007, before the Senate Finance Committee hearing on the Meth Project's successful methamphetamine prevention campaign.

Nearly a quarter of teens say it would be "very easy" or "somewhat easy" to gain access to methamphetamine, a survey released Tuesday shows.

One in three teens also believes there is only a "slight risk" or "no risk" in trying meth once or twice, according to the study by The Meth Project, a nonprofit anti-drug group that produces gritty ads to show the perils of meth abuse.

And about one in four teens said there are benefits to using meth. Twenty-four percent of teens agreed with the statement that meth "makes you feel euphoric or very happy," while 22 percent said meth "helps you lose weight" and 22 percent said it "helps you deal with boredom."

Lawmakers and government officials said the survey highlights the need for an aggressive public education campaign to inform kids about the dangers of the highly addictive stimulant.

"For kids, meth is death," said Dr. Julie Gerberding, head of the federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. "And if we really want to do something about improving the survival of our adolescents and help them become healthy adults, we've got to tackle this problem head on."

Gerberding praised The Meth Project's two-year anti-meth ad campaign in Montana, which is credited for helping reduce meth use in the state by 45 percent since 2005. The ads use graphic images to portray the drug's ravages on young people.

By contrast, meth use among teens nationally remained unchanged over the same period, according to the annual drug use survey released last month by the Health and Human Services Department.

Getting to kids at an early stage is crucial, Gerberding said. Of the teens who have tried meth, 77 percent reported they used the drug when they were 15 or younger, the survey showed.

On the positive side, a majority of teens - 76 percent - voiced "strong" disapproval with trying meth once or twice, about the same level as those who disapproved of trying cocaine or heroin.

"What this survey shows us is that we have more work to do," said White House drug czar John Walters said. "These attitudes are troubling. We still have too many kids who say they can get their hands on this poison."

The White House Office of National Drug Control Policy began a meth prevention ad campaign earlier this month. The print and broadcast ads - including four produced by The Meth Project - will appear in eight states where meth use remains high: Alaska, California, Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kentucky, Oregon and Washington.

Walters said prevention efforts appear to be having an impact. He pointed to a report last December from the National Institute on Drug Abuse that showed meth use among teens declined 50 percent from 2001 to 2005.

The survey for The Meth Project was conducted by GfK Roper Public Affairs & Media and questioned 2,602 junior and senior high school students ages 12-17 at 43 schools across the country.

On the Net:

- The Meth Project: <http://www.methproject.com>