

Methamphetamine: What's Cooking in Your Neighborhood

Methamphetamine is a powerfully addictive stimulant that dramatically affects the brain and the rest of the central nervous system. It is easily made due to its extremely low cost and the fact that the ingredients, ephedrine and pseudoephedrine are found in over-the-counter medications and other household products. The ingredients are cooked into a powder that can be smoked, snorted, injected, or added to a beverage. Typical psychological effects of the methamphetamine high include euphoria, alertness, and feelings of increased strength, invulnerability, increased confidence, and competence. The meth high is followed by a devastating low. Users may experience irritability, anxiety, depression, fatigue, paranoia, hallucinations, and intense cravings for the drug. Additionally, there are many long term affects of using methamphetamine, which all can result in death.

Methamphetamine has been a growing problem in New Jersey. The number of identified U.S. meth labs grew from 549 in 1990 to 2,025 in 1999. In New Jersey methamphetamine sells for \$8,500 to \$20,000 per kilogram, \$800 to \$1,500 per ounce. Recently, the production manager of a chemical company in East Windsor was arrested for diverting more than 19 tons of chemicals to methamphetamine.

Parents and caregivers should have a basic understanding about meth and its risks. They must realize that methamphetamine may appeal to teens who are worried about weight control or who are eager for maximum endurance at sports, studies, and play. The likelihood of youth using substances is reduced when parents have information and talk to their children regularly about drugs. Communities can prevent these problems by learning more about the drug and combining efforts with individual and family focused prevention activities. For more information contact Lisa Harmon Mollicone, Manalapan/Englishtown Alliance Coordinator for the Prevention of Alcohol and Drug Abuse at (732) 446-8417.