

WYOMING METH PROJECT

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

Casper, Wyoming—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 study found that methamphetamine use imposes a significant and disproportionate burden on both individuals and society in money spent on treatment, healthcare, and foster care 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 amount spent on Meth each year. A portion of this burden is held by the Wyoming District Court, where 94% of its drug offenders were convicted of Meth-related crimes in 2007—the highest percentage in the country.ⁱ Based on the RAND research model and current usage rates in Wyoming, Meth abuse could cost the state nearly \$200 million each year.

“The threat of Meth addiction affects every single member of the community, and it takes the resolve of an entire community to fight it,” said Tom Pagel, Casper Police Chief, who founded the Casper Meth Initiative six years ago. “Wyoming is taking on its Meth problem with a comprehensive approach, and we’ve made prevention our first line of defense. The Wyoming Meth Project is at the core of our prevention strategy, raising awareness with an advertising campaign that speaks to young people and community meetings to educate everyone in our state about the dangers of Meth.”

The Wyoming Meth Project, a large-scale research-based prevention program aimed at reducing Meth use through public service messaging, public policy, and community outreach, first launched in June, 2008 as the leading prevention group working to achieve the goals of the Casper Meth Initiative. The Project focuses its efforts on reaching teens and young adults with a strong prevention message. Wyoming ranks #1 in the U.S. for Meth use by people aged 12 and older, up from #13 in 2005, according to data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2006ⁱⁱ. If the state can successfully reduce Meth abuse, millions of dollars could be saved in drug treatment and recovery costs.

“We must work together to prevent and treat substance abuse. In a rural state like Wyoming, the people affected by this epidemic are not just nameless, faceless statistics. They are our friends, our relatives, our co-workers, and our neighbor’s children,” said U.S. Senator John Barrasso. “Many leading scientists and addiction specialists across the nation said Wyoming was the first state in the Union to develop an interdisciplinary plan to address all aspects of the substance abuse problem. Wyoming should be proud of our leadership, but not complacent.”

“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.”

To view the full results of the RAND study, please www.methproject.org.

The Casper Meth Initiative recently released a comprehensive status report outlining the progress the group has made in combating methamphetamine abuse over the last three years. Among the report’s key

findings is the growing recognition of Wyoming Meth Project activities outside of Casper, including the presence of a high-impact, award-winning ad campaign and grass-roots community meetings in Cheyenne, Sheridan, Gillette, Rock Springs, and Fremont County. For more information about upcoming events in Wyoming, please visit www.wyomingmethproject.org.

About the Wyoming Meth Project

The Wyoming Meth Project is a non-profit organization that implements a range of advertising and community action programs to reduce methamphetamine use in the state. Launched in 2008, the Wyoming Meth Project leverages a proven model that combines extensive research with a hard-hitting, integrated media campaign. The Wyoming Meth Project is affiliated with 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. For more information, visit www.wyomingmethproject.org.

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Media Contacts:

Jean Davies
Wyoming Meth Project
(307) 268-7136
jdavies@wyomingmethproject.org

Toni Haubert
Weber Shandwick
(415) 449-0134
thaubert@webershandwick.com

ⁱ U.S. Attorney's Office, District of Wyoming, FY07 Annual Report, 2007

ⁱⁱ SAMHSA, National Survey on Drug Use and Health, 2006