



Survey suggests Wyoming teens are learning meth's dangers

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Wyoming high school students are becoming more aware of the risks and dangers of methamphetamine use, according to a survey conducted earlier this year of the state's students.

The Wyoming Meth Use and Attitude Survey's results suggest that 62 percent of teenagers see "great risk" in trying the drug just once or twice — an increase of 9 percent from a similar benchmark survey taken in the spring of 2008, according to the Wyoming Meth Project.

The 2011 survey reflects the interviews of 1,226 junior and senior high students from Wyoming high schools. The students, ages 12 to 17, were chosen randomly.

The results were announced Monday at a media conference at Kelly Walsh High School. Students and supporters of the Meth Project attended the event.

"One of the questions we're frequently asked is, 'How will we know when we've succeeded and it's time to end the campaign?'" said Nathan Bekke, chairman of the Wyoming Meth Project and publisher of the Star-Tribune.

"Twenty-three percent of our teens report that meth is easy to acquire ... that's one in four," Bekke said. "Eleven percent say they have been offered meth. That means that approximately 176 students at Kelly Walsh High School have been offered methamphetamine in the last year. The Wyoming Meth Project will continue until meth is no longer available."

More than three-fourths of the teens surveyed — or 81 percent — reported feeling that trying meth once or twice could turn them into someone they don't want to be. That's a 13 point increase from the 2008 survey. The same percent reported feeling that trying meth could lead to addiction — a 12-point increase from the 2008 survey.

Casper Police Capt. Mark Trimble spoke at the announcement of the survey's findings. He said local law enforcement officials believe the Meth Project is addressing methamphetamine's perception.

"It is extremely addictive," Trimble said of the drug, which the U.S. Department of Justice says is the primary drug threat to Wyoming. "Somebody uses it once or twice, and before they know it, it's steamrolling and they can't seem to catch up."

Trimble also said the Meth Project's survey suggests that teens across the state are becoming more aware of the problems the drug can cause the people around a user.

Sixty-three percent of the teens surveyed this year reported having advised friends not to use methamphetamine.

Eighty-five percent say they strongly disapprove of using meth once or twice.

The Wyoming Meth Project launched a major advertising campaign in 2008. The campaign's message is depicted in graphic advertisements with the slogan, "Meth: Not even once."

The Meth Project began in Montana in 2005. Wyoming was the fifth state to implement the strategy.

“My biggest deal is as a parent,” Kelly Walsh Principal Brad Diller said. “I think of the slogan, ‘Not even once.’ As a parent, I know that’s important to me. And then I look at some of the kids here today. Not even once is what I’m looking for from them. You look at their faces and so many things lie ahead of them, and you want to make sure they don’t have an opportunity even once to make a bad choice.”

The 2011 survey took place between March 21 and May 31. It can be obtained at the Wyoming Meth Project’s website at www.wyomingmethproject.org/research.