

GEORGIA METH PROJECT®

Georgia Meth Project Launches Statewide Meth Prevention Campaign

State Leaders from the Public and Private Sectors Unveil New Statewide Initiative to Address Emerging Social and Public Health Issue

ATLANTA—March 8, 2010—The Georgia Meth Project today launched a statewide prevention campaign designed to significantly reduce methamphetamine use. Meth has rapidly become one of Georgia’s most critical public health and law enforcement challenges and is estimated to cost the state \$1.3 billion in law enforcement, treatment, social services, and lost productivity.ⁱ

Georgia Meth Project Chairman Lee Shaw and Executive Director Jim Langford unveiled the Georgia Meth Project’s new public service messaging and community outreach campaign at an event at the Georgia State Capitol, where they were joined by United States Senator Johnny Isakson, Georgia Attorney General Thurbert Baker, state and community leaders, treatment and prevention experts, and local law enforcement officials.

“Methamphetamine is taking a severe toll on our criminal justice and social service systems,” said Attorney General Baker. “Jurisdictions around the state are fighting a wave of rising crime, domestic violence, and child abuse and child deprivation driven by increases in Meth abuse. We cannot afford to be complacent about this issue. With the launch of the Georgia Meth Project we are taking a significant, proactive step to address this problem before it becomes the epidemic that has crippled so many other states.”

According to the U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA), over the past five years, methamphetamine has become the fastest-growing drug problem in Atlanta, Dalton, and Gainesville.ⁱⁱ Atlanta is consistently cited by the DEA as a strategic hub for drug-trafficking organizations including Mexican drug cartels. As a result, the Atlanta metro region has seen the supply of Meth increase.ⁱⁱⁱ

“Once Meth takes hold, it strains government resources and destroys the fabric of communities,” said Senator Isakson. “But if we move quickly with a focus on prevention, as well as law enforcement and treatment, we can reverse the trend and prevent a generation of Georgians from ever trying Meth. With today’s launch we are creating a powerful public-private partnership that will enable us to reach that goal.”

The Georgia Meth Project is a large-scale, statewide prevention effort aimed at reducing Meth use. Central to the program is a hard-hitting, research-based public messaging campaign that includes television, radio, print, billboard, and Internet advertising to educate young people about the risks of Meth use. The campaign takes a peer-to-peer approach and the radio ads feature real Georgia teens who poignantly describe their experiences with Meth. The saturation-level media campaign, which begins airing today, will reach 70 to 90% of teens, three to five times per week.

Georgia's prevention program is based on the Meth Project model first launched in Montana in 2005. Since the initiation of the Montana Meth Project, the state has seen significant declines in methamphetamine use. In 2005, Montana ranked #5 in the nation for Meth use. By 2009, the state ranked #39.^{iv} Meth use among teens dropped by 63%, and Meth-related crimes declined 62%.^v In Arizona, which launched the Arizona Meth Project in 2007, teen methamphetamine use has dropped by more than 50%.^{vi} The Meth Project has since expanded to Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Illinois, and Wyoming.

“The declines in Meth use already seen in states like Montana, Arizona, and Idaho—which have had the Meth Project model in place for several years—clearly demonstrate how a comprehensive, integrated prevention campaign can have a significant impact,” said Georgia Meth Project Executive Director Jim Langford. “By initiating this effort now, we believe Georgia can forestall a potential crisis.”

At today's event, Georgia Meth Project officials also announced the results of the first *Georgia Meth Use & Attitudes Survey*. The benchmark study examines the attitudes that Georgia teens and young adults from across the state have toward methamphetamine. The survey found that 20% of teens and 34% of young adults report Meth is easy to get. Despite the well-documented dangers associated with methamphetamine use, 35% of Georgia teens see little to no risk in trying Meth.^{vii} Fifty-eight percent said their parents have never spoken with their teen about Meth.

“Meth is one of the most dangerous and powerfully addictive substances in existence,” said Neil Kaltenecker, Executive Director of the Georgia Council on Substance Abuse. “It is nearly unmatched in the severe physical and psychological effects on the user. Telling young people about the dangers of methamphetamine use is critical because the data clearly show that many of them are at risk of experimentation due to lack of education.”

The Georgia Meth Project's ongoing, research-based advertising campaign will be complemented by statewide community outreach programs executed in concert with existing local coalitions.

The Georgia Meth Project was established through the support of a broad set of private foundations, corporations, and individuals from the across the state who are committed to fostering healthy communities, including Shaw Industries, Beaulieu of America, Inc., J&J Industries, Textile Rubber, Alan S. Lorberbaum Family Foundation, the Julian Saul Family, the Robert W. Woodruff Foundation, Hamilton Health Care System, the Home Depot Foundation, and Cox Enterprises. For more information, and to view the Georgia Meth Project ads, visit the website at www.georgiamethproject.org/Ads.

About the Georgia Meth Project

The Georgia 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 2010 and based in Atlanta, the Georgia Meth Project leverages a proven model that combines extensive research with a hard-hitting, integrated media campaign. The Georgia Meth Project is affiliated with the Meth Project, a national non-profit organization headquartered in Palo Alto, Calif., aimed at significantly reducing first-time Meth use through public service messaging, public policy, and community outreach. For more information, visit www.georgiamethproject.org.

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Media Contacts:

Jim Langford, Executive Director
Georgia Meth Project
404-285-2001
jlangford@georgiamethproject.org

Lawrence Gellerstedt
Jackson Spalding
404-214-3556
lg@jacksonspalding.com

ⁱ Estimate based on RAND Corporation. *The Economic Cost of Methamphetamine Use in the United States*. February 2009.

ⁱⁱ U.S. Department of Justice. *DEA Fact Sheet: Georgia*. 2008.

ⁱⁱⁱ Ibid.

^{iv} Montana Department of Justice. *Methamphetamine in Montana: A Follow-up Report on Trends and Progress*. April 2008.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Arizona Criminal Justice Commission. *2008 Arizona Youth Survey*. October 2008.

^{vii} Georgia Meth Project. *2010 Georgia Meth Use & Attitudes Survey*. March 2010.