

Tuesday, March 09, 2010

Georgia Meth Project Launches Statewide Meth Prevention Campaign

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Due to the danger of the chemicals used, law enforcement must wear protective suits while in meth labs.

The Georgia Meth Project on Monday 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.

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,

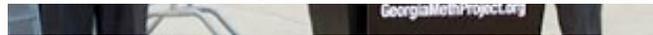
methamphetamine has become the fastest-growing drug problem in Atlanta, Dalton, and Gainesville.

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.



"Once Meth takes hold, it strains government resources and destroys the fabric of communities," said 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.



The Georgia Meth Project launched on the steps of the Georgia state capitol Monday, March 8. Georgia Attorney General Thurbert Baker addresses a crowd of supporters and media while Sen. Johnny Isakson, left, and Georgia Meth Project Executive Director Jim Langford stand beside him. The state-wide prevention campaign is intended to significantly reduce methamphetamine usage in Georgia. (Jenni Girtman/ Jackson Spalding/ Georgia Meth Project)

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. 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%.

At Monday'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. Fifty-eight percent said their parents have never spoken with their teen about Meth.