



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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CONTACT: José A. Álvarez (619) 515-6635
(619) 964-1526 cell

METH PROBLEM DECLINING IN REGION ***County Releases Methamphetamine Report Card***

Today, the County of San Diego Methamphetamine Strike Force released its 2008 Meth Report Card, which shows local meth use is on the decline.

“The tide is turning on meth,” said Chairwoman Dianne Jacob from the County Board of Supervisors at an event to announce the release of the report outside the County Administration Center.

“Most of the key indicators on the fight against meth clearly show that our efforts to eradicate meth from our communities are having positive results.”

Jacob was joined by Nick Macchione, Director of the Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) and Tri-Chair of the Meth Strike Force; Dr. Marshall Lewis from HHSA’s Behavioral Health Services division; several Meth Strike Force representatives; and former meth users.

The latest meth report card revealed improvements in several areas, including:

- Emergency room mentions are down (29%)
- Treatment admissions declined (3%)
- Number of arrestees testing positive for meth is down (7%—adults; 3%—juveniles)
- Number of arrests because of meth is down (25%)
- Meth seizures are also down (40%)

The positive results, Jacob indicated, “...are thanks to the great effort of the Meth Strike Force and approximately 70 organizations and agencies that have been addressing meth-related problems throughout the region for over a decade.”

However, not all news in the Meth Report Card was positive. The number of meth deaths in San Diego County increased from 174 in 2006 to 184 in 2007. Furthermore, the number of children removed from drug-infested environments in 2007 remained practically the same. Officers rescued 375 children from meth-infested homes, one more than the year before. Authorities cleaned 14 meth labs in 2007, four more than the previous year but dozens less than 8 years ago.



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Aside from human loss, meth also takes a financial toll on communities.

“Meth addiction is not cheap. It is a major public health problem that costs U.S. taxpayers billions of dollars every year,” said Macchione.

According to a recent study conducted by the Rand Corporation, meth abuse cost U.S. taxpayers about \$23 billion in 2005.

The figure includes the estimated costs of meth treatment, lost productivity, crime and criminal justice costs, and child endangerment, among other costs.

A meth user can be anyone—teens, parents, college students, men, women. According to the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, 11 percent of Californians have a close friend who uses methamphetamine and 13 percent of Californians have been asked to try the drug.

People use meth for varied reasons; however, the result is almost always the same. Tolerance for the drug quickly develops, leading people to become addicted in a short time.

Mariah Sheneman, 24, started using meth at age 14. She was hooked instantly.

“It was crazy. There was nothing I wouldn’t do for meth,” said Sheneman who was arrested four times during her 10-year addiction. Six months ago, she entered Crossroads, one of the many County-funded treatment programs in the region.

She has since turned her life around and hopes that her sister, also addicted to meth, follows her example. “I never had anything going for me. I could not continue to do this,” concluded Sheneman who is now a student at a local community college.

People suffering from a meth addiction or who suspect drug activity in their community, are encouraged to call the Meth Hotline at 1-877-no2meth (662-6384). Meth crime can also be reported online at www.no2meth.org. The calls and reports are completely confidential.

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