



# COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**  
June 22, 2009

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## **METH: NOTHING TO SMILE ABOUT** **County Launches Campaign to Get People Off Meth** ***“Meth Mouth” Brochures Distributed at Dental Clinics***

The County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) today launched the “Meth Mouth” campaign to raise awareness about the harmful effects of meth use, and to encourage people to seek treatment for their addiction.

“Meth Mouth is one of the most obvious physical effects seen in some meth users,” said Chairwoman Dianne Jacob, from the County of San Diego Board of Supervisors. She was joined by Pam Smith, Deputy Director, HHSA’s—East Region; Susan Bower, Director, HHSA’s Alcohol and Drug Services; Dr. Maria Nuñez-Ouji, a dentist at La Maestra Community Health Centers-Dental Clinic in Lemon Grove and former meth users.

“Meth mouth often leaves users with enormous dental bills and holes in their mouths. When it comes to meth, there is nothing to smile about. Meth is death,” Jacob added.

As part of the campaign, about 90,000 English and Spanish “Meth Mouth” brochures will be available at dental clinics, County Family Resource Centers, community organizations, and many other locations throughout the county.

The campaign is a collaborative effort between HHSA, the Dental Health Initiative/Share the Care, the County’s Meth Strike Force, the East County Dental Task Force and the San Diego County Dental Health Coalition.

“We hope the brochures will help reduce the number of meth-related deaths and encourage people to seek treatment by increasing awareness of the dangers and the signs of meth use, especially meth mouth,” said Smith. “Recognizing the symptoms of meth use could help you assist a friend or a loved one escape the tragedy of meth addiction.”

Meth Mouth results from the acidic nature of the drug and its tendency to cause dry mouth. To relieve thirst or dry mouth, meth users crave high sugar foods, drinks, and gum. These can contribute to widespread tooth decay.

**(More)**



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How can you tell if a person has meth mouth? Look for cavities, breaking or crumbling teeth, swollen or bleeding gums, loose teeth and mouth sores.

According to the California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs, about one in ten Californians (11 percent) has a close friend who uses methamphetamine and 13 percent of Californians have been asked to try the drug.

There were 1,014 meth-related deaths in the County of San Diego between 2003 and 2007, according to the Medical Examiner's Office.

Bringing meth users into treatment is one of the goals of the Meth Mouth campaign. The County of San Diego funds a number of residential and non-residential treatment programs throughout the region.

"People can and do kick their addictions. Recovery is possible with support, perseverance and determination," said Bower.

After 32 years as an addict, Chris Davis learned first hand the consequences of meth use. She not only lost her family, she lost eight teeth and now uses a dental plate to feel comfortable with her smile.

"I feel great. It's a rebirth for me," said Davis, who has been clean for 18 months and lives at Crossroads4Recovery, a County-funded, residential treatment program. "I don't have to cover my mouth anymore. I can smile again. I get to experience life."

People suffering from a meth addiction are encouraged to call the Meth Hotline at 1-877-no2meth (662-6384) or visit [www.no2meth.org](http://www.no2meth.org).

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