

News Release Wyoming Department of Health

Date: November 7, 2005

Subject: "Methamphetamine Planning Study completed"

CHEYENNE — A report requested by the Legislature and released this week recommends 11 action steps be taken to reinforce existing programs and to expand others in addressing Wyoming's methamphetamine crisis.

Produced by the Substance Abuse Division of the Wyoming Department of Health, the "Methamphetamine Planning Study" cited data showing that existing treatment protocols can be successful in treating methamphetamine addicts and users, and that recovery programs targeting substance abusers are effective. But the report noted that Wyoming has limited treatment resources and a lack of residential housing that provides transitional recovery support services.

The document acknowledges that the full extent of the methamphetamine abuse problem in Wyoming is unknown, but that it is significant (when meth specific law enforcement arrest and substance abuse treatment admissions are considered, combined with youth risk behavioral studies). During fiscal year 2004, the report indicated 2,243 Wyoming residents received treatment for methamphetamine addictions at state funded treatment programs. The report also cited statistics that indicated Wyoming school students reported methamphetamine use at a rate higher than the national average.

"Just throwing money at the problem will not work, but additional sources will be needed" said report author Dr. Ann Reyes, Deputy Administrator for Clinical and Treatment Services at the substance abuse division. "There are solutions to this problem. They require hard work and they require long-term commitment of all of us."

The conclusions reached in the study were based on Wyoming specific research and data, Reyes said. A total of 10 Wyoming specific data sources were used, spanning the Departments of Corrections, Education, Family Services, and Health, the Attorney General's Office, the Division of Criminal Investigations and other state agencies. Other sources such as the Wyoming Hospital Association, Wyoming Association of Municipalities, Wyoming Association of County Officials, multiple professional associations, as well as federal and private sources containing Wyoming specific data were also referenced.

Among the conclusions is that significant taxpayer savings and a reduction in drug-related crime could occur if prevention programs and interventions for at risk juveniles are initiated before they find themselves in the criminal justice system. The report recommends that substance abuse evaluations be conducted on first time juvenile offenders so appropriate treatment and/or interventions can be initiated.

The report urges continued funding and development of substance abuse prevention and treatment services statewide and continuation and expansion of the drug court system. Data indicated drug court programs decrease drug use, result in less repeat arrests, and are cost effective.

"Substance abuse treatment is more economical when compared to extremely costly alternatives such as incarceration," Reyes said.

The 276-page study was produced over the past six months in response to House Bill 275 passed by the 2005 Wyoming Legislature.

The study gives a positive assessment of initial state efforts to address the growing methamphetamine problem, but it indicates that more needs to be done. For example, the number of drug free babies born to drug court

participants has increased, and the report indicates that well over half of all people seeking substance abuse treatment in the state encounter delays with a waiting period of up to 30 or more days.

"Wyoming is poised on both a government and local citizen level to continue the war against Methamphetamine, which is vital to the ability to move forward with our efforts," Reyes concludes.

The study identified specific substance abuse prevention and treatment service needs statewide. They include:

- Expanded services and funding in all nine judicial districts including an expansion of residential and outpatient treatment options;
 - Fund additional social detoxification beds in all adult and adolescent residential programs statewide;
- Fund and certify recovery support services, including intensive case management and transitional housing;
 - Fund and add intensive secondary prevention and intervention programs in all alternative high schools:
- Fund and add intensive primary prevention and intervention programs to all residential and outpatient programs serving women and children.
- Funding preferences were identified as existing state certified facilities or programs already providing some form of residential treatment; adolescent services and women's services; and where impractical or unfeasible to add residential services, preference should be given to the nearest available location where needed service is already provided.
- and, technical assistance to providers where expansion includes new treatment type or level, a new target population and/or to obtain state certification for new or existing services.

The report also listed specific recommendations for each of the nine judicial districts.

The complete report may be accessed at: http://wdh.state.wy.us/SAD/index.asp.

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