

Survey: Wyoming Teens Misinformed about Meth

July 22, 2008

CASPER (AP) -- Some Wyoming teenagers and young adults see little danger in using methamphetamine, a new statewide survey shows.

The survey, commissioned by the Wyoming Meth Project, found that nearly one-quarter of the Wyoming residents between the ages of 12 and 24 surveyed see little or no risk in trying meth. And more than half of teenagers surveyed say it's easy to obtain the drug.

Thirty percent of teens and nearly 50 percent of young adults in the survey also indicated that meth contributes to weight loss. Twenty percent of teens and 23 percent of young adults said the drug leads to increased happiness.

"My guess would be that this is what they hear from other people and what they've known other people to experience," said Jean Davies, executive director of the Wyoming Meth Project.

"Of course, people who use meth definitely lose weight," Davies said. "It's just that they go for days without sleeping. And it gives you energy because it's speed. They make it with such horrible, horrible things that it's tearing up your body. And the addiction is so bad."

Parents were also surveyed, and 65 percent said it would be at least somewhat easy for their children to acquire meth. Nearly half of the teens and young adults said their parents have never spoken with them about the drug.

"People want to believe their kids would never do something so dangerous," Davies said. "You don't want to think your kid would do something that would harm them."

Davies said communication between kids and adults is essential to fighting addiction.

The survey was conducted by GfK Roper Public Affairs and Media in April and May. The study interviewed 909 junior and senior high school students. It also interviewed 300 18-24 year-olds around the state and 323 parents of 12-19 year-olds. The study has a margin of error of plus or minus 3 percent for students and 6 percent for both the young adults and parents.

Davies said the survey was conducted before the project started its current statewide advertising campaign highlighting the dangers of meth, on June 16. She said the six-week campaign, which includes television, radio and billboard advertising, will cost about \$340,000. She said advertising may start again after the November election.

The Wyoming Meth Project plans to conduct another statewide survey this winter to gauge how the advertising campaign has changed public opinion of the drug in the state, Davies said.

Speaking of her reaction to the survey findings that so many Wyoming young people discount the dangers of meth, Davies said, "Having worked around this for so many years, I think kids think they're 10 feet tall and bulletproof."