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## Survey shows misconceptions about meth

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Some Wyoming teens and young adults believe that methamphetamine is low-risk and easily accessible, according to a new statewide survey by the Wyoming Meth Project.

The study of meth use and attitudes toward the drug in Wyoming indicates that 23 percent of people between the ages of 12 and 24 see little or no risk in trying meth, and more than half of teens said the drug is easily obtainable from within the community.

"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.

Thirty percent of teens and nearly 50 percent of young adults in the survey indicated that they believe there are significant benefits to meth use, including weight loss and increased happiness.

"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."

Of parents surveyed, 65 percent said it would be at least somewhat easy for their children to acquire meth, but 48 percent of teens and young adults said their parents have never spoken with them about the drug.

Overwhelmingly, parents said there was very little or no chance their children had ever tried meth.

"I don't think it applies just to meth. 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 she doesn't think parents are being irresponsible about the drug, rather that communication between kids and adults is essential to fighting future addictions.

"It's so crucial that we keep getting this out there. One of our big pushes is to get kids and parents talking, and our education model is why we want them talking about it," she said. "If they're talking to their kids, chances are the kids are going to talk back."

The Wyoming Meth Project, launched in June, is modeled after a national version of the project and was created to educate the state's young people of the risks of methamphetamine through public service messaging, public policy and community outreach.

Casper Star-Tribune publisher Nathan Bekke is a member of the Wyoming Meth Project board.

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