

Billings Gazette
Survey finds fewer teens using meth

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New figures released Wednesday by the Montana Office of Public Instruction show another drop in methamphetamine use among Montana teenagers between 2007 and 2009.

The 2009 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, a national survey designed by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and administered to students in grades eight, 10 and 12, shows that 3.1 percent of Montana students reported having used meth at least once during their lives. That is down from 4.6 percent in 2007 and 8.3 percent in 2005.

Montana Meth Project Chairman Mike Gullede, publisher of The Billings Gazette, said the 63 percent drop in teen meth use since 2005, the year the Meth Project started, is further evidence that the multimillion-dollar ad campaign is having an effect in the state.

"The program has exceeded all expectations, and I commend the people of the state of Montana for making it possible," he said.

In a press release from a public-relations firm associated with the Montana Meth Project, the results were also hailed by Montana Attorney General Steve Bullock, Rep. Denny Rehberg, R-Mont., and Sen. Max Baucus, D-Mont.

"The drop in meth use amongst teens is great news, and I want to personally thank the Meth Project, law enforcement and community leaders from across the state," Bullock said.

The press release said that a 2009 report from Bullock's office estimated that the costs associated with the meth problem in Montana peaked at \$300 million in 2005 and have dropped \$100 million over the past three years.

Since 1999, the YRBS surveys have shown a steady decline in meth use among Montana teens, from 13.5 percent in 1999 to the 8.3 percent figure reported in 2005, and now to 3.1 percent in 2009.