



Scourge of meth is waning

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By IR Staff

Great news rang loudly from the state Capitol Tuesday, as findings of a new report on methamphetamine use among Montana teenagers indicated another drastic drop in use of the dirty scourge.

The new results, released by the Centers for Disease Control, the Montana Meth Project and the Montana Office of Public Instruction, show meth use by Montana high school students has dropped 66 percent in the past eight years since the first such survey of risky behavior was conducted, and the rate of use has finally dipped below the 10 percent mark — a significant benchmark to curbing its appeal, use and impact.

That's fantastic on all levels — and we have the Montana Meth Project to thank.

The Montana Meth Project, with its in-your-face, disgusting ads on television, billboards and in newspapers across the state, is working. Since its launch in 2005, meth use among our teens has dropped by 50 percent.

It's no wonder.

Each phase of the ad campaign, which targets eliminating meth use before it ever begins with its "not even once" slogan, has progressively become more repulsive. The ads first showed meth's destructive force in graphic pictures — rotting teeth, gaping sores and sunken identities. In this the third phase, the Montana Meth Project has grossly depicted the residual effect, the impact not only on users, but on their loved ones and friends, too.

There's no arguing meth is a dirty drug that has no place in our society. In many rural and urban communities across the nation where the drug still runs rampant, meth use accounts for up to 80 percent of property crime as addicts steal anything — including aluminum rails off bridges — to bankroll their habits.

The new report indicates that, since the Meth Project was launched, meth-related crime in Montana has dropped 50 percent. Workers testing positive for meth has declined an impressive 70 percent, the largest drop in the country.

Says Dr. Rick Rawson, associate director of Integrated Substance Abuse Programs at UCLA and a foremost national authority on meth: "These results are very impressive. The Montana Meth Project has made a major investment in the people of Montana and it appears to have paid big dividends. This report clearly shows that the Meth Project's campaign is having an impact, and the message is getting through effectively. Teen attitudes toward meth in Montana have shifted dramatically, especially when compared to the rest of the nation."

A big source of the drastic decline, aside from the hard-hitting ads, has been improved communication between parents and teens. The project has raised awareness and fostered family discussion, where true abstinence begins.

These are cheerful accomplishments. Progress is indisputable.

But where do we take it from here? Montana is clearly the example, so how do we maintain our progress and the level of funding it takes to pull it off? How do we get other states — every state — to jump on board and extinguish this cantankerous problem for good?