

Community Perceptions of the Problem of Substance Abuse & Methamphetamine Use in the Appalachian Region

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A Community Approach to Address
Substance Abuse, including
Methamphetamine, in Appalachia,
March 20-22, 2006,

The findings:

- Drawn from application data
- Describe the “problem in our community”
- Represent 6 states (Al, Ky, SC, TN, VA, WVA)
- Represent 26 counties

Overall, substance abuse is serious, pervasive, gaining a stronghold

- “threatening the core”
- “shaking the foundation”
- “becoming an epidemic; rampant”
- “touches every individual, family, corporate entity”
- “crosses all socioeconomic & sociocultural lines”
- “so extreme we may need to leave for safe ed”
- “becoming known for our presc. med. problem”

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Characteristics of Abused Substances

- Rates higher than state/ national averages
- Types: alcohol, tobacco, marijuana, prescription drugs (oxycontin, benzodiazepam, lortab)
- Increasing use of opioids & IV drugs
- Recent increasing use of meth
 - “meth is moving into our community”
 - “quietly seeping into our community”
 - “on the rise”
 - “a hotbed of meth production & use”

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Major themes

- Affects our children and their future
 - Families are destroyed
 - Business can't find reliable labor
 - Poverty increases and becomes generational
 - Education takes a back seat to “getting by”

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Families are destroyed

- 40% children in foster care involves meth use
- 33% increase in cases of child abuse
- Can't reunify children with parents
- Prenatal drug exposure (addicted parents)
- Children ingesting parents' pills, pot, alcohol
- Grandparents as primary caretakers
- Parents uninvolved in children's education and lives
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Business can't find reliable labor

- Low employment rates
- People aren't employable
- Can't pass drug screen
- Lost jobs/ absenteeism
- Communities unable to attract new industry
- Unskilled labor positions predominate

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Poverty is increasing & generational

- Meth as source of income
- Busy corridors for transport of illegal drugs
- Location creates gateway for drug activity
- Comes in from neighboring counties
- Linked with increasing juvenile violent crimes, substance abuse, high school drop out rates above national (17.6-26%)

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Other outcomes for our young people

- Increased drug related deaths & injury
- Increased suicide particularly young males

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Impact on law enforcement & court system

- 75% arrests r/t substance abuse (thefts, home burglary, check & prescription forgery)
- Challenge to prosecute when return addicted to community
- Jails populated (few tx. resources)
- Limited law enforcement with rural terrain
- Detection difficult

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Impact on healthcare facilities

- Most emergency calls for ODs
- Causes or exacerbates medical illnesses (diabetes, STDs)
- Facilities are “overwhelmed”
- Uses resources needed to educate & care for community

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Education is not a priority

- Takes a back seat to “getting by”
- Schools are places to obtain & sell drugs with few consequences
- Parents uninvolved (addiction hx.)
- “rolling meth labs” with children in vehicles
- High dropout rates; don’t enroll in high school

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Our communities

- Have limited access to resources
- Need awareness & involvement
- Are concerned for health, safety, well-being

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Our people are vulnerable

- Uninsured
- Poor
- High school dropouts
- Young
- Unemployed
- Severely work disabled
- Depressed
- Have used drugs within last month

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Conclusions

- Nothing seems to erode the stronghold...
- We do not stand alone in the battle of substance abuse with our youth....

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