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GETTING OUT THE WORD ON CRYSTAL METH

WHITEHORSE – Seventy-five frontline workers gathered recently to hear the latest word on crystal meth. The workshop was sponsored jointly by Health and Social Services, the RCMP and Kwanlin Dun Health Centre and is part of a crystal meth education series currently underway in the Yukon.

“I think it is most telling, but also most gratifying that so many people – nurses, social workers, youth workers and street workers – were all willing to devote the time to find out more about this drug,” Health and Social Services Minister Brad Cathers said. “We have been hearing more and more about this drug and are taking steps to be prepared to deal with it.”

Participants heard about what crystal meth is, its many toxic ingredients and the harmful effects of the dangerous drug on individuals’ health.

“Crystal meth has the most potential for permanent brain damage than any other drug currently in use and the health consequences are significant and severe. The average life span of a chronic user is five to seven years,” community health nurse at Kwanlin Dun Health, Michelle Woolsey, said.

Participants also learned about risks and harms of crystal meth on the community, and tips for doing effective crystal meth education and prevention.

“These frontline workers are the individuals who are going to come face-to-face with the ravages of this drug,” Cathers said. “They need to be aware of the most up-to-date information, and treatment options. They are going to be the people that parents will turn to if they need help, and are the most obvious people to assist those who become addicted.”

The minister added that a crystal meth addiction is treated very much like an alcohol addiction although it may take longer than the normal 28 day residential treatment program. Alcohol and Drug Services is able to detoxify and treat those addicted to crystal meth and these skills will be enhanced with further training later this winter.

An additional workshop for frontline workers will take place in April to accommodate the waiting list from the first session. These workshops are under the umbrella of the Yukon Substance Abuse Action Plan.

A public presentation will be held Feb. 1, beginning at 7 p.m. in the basement of the United Church. Guest speaker will be Cherylee Highway from the Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies.

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