

**CRYSTAL METH AND
OTHER AMPHETAMINES:
An Integrated BC Strategy**

SIX-MONTH PROGRESS REPORT

APRIL 2005



View *Crystal Meth & Other Amphetamines: An Integrated BC Strategy* (August 2004) at: http://www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/mhd/pdf/meth_final.pdf online.

View *Every Door is the Right Door: BC's Planning Framework to Address Problematic Substance Use and Addiction* (May 2004) at: http://www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/mhd/pdf/framework_for_substance_use_and_addiction.pdf online.

Message FROM THE MINISTER OF STATE



This six-month progress report on BC's integrated strategy to address use of crystal meth and other amphetamines is a compilation of activities completed or underway by a wide variety of provincial and community-based partners including municipalities, local social service agencies, health authorities and the ministries of Children and Family Development, Community, Aboriginal and Women's Services, Education, Human Resources, Public Safety and Solicitor General, and Health Services.

I am pleased to present this report on behalf of these partners. These efforts demonstrate the successful ability of our province to provide a coordinated and comprehensive response to a problem that has health, social and economic consequences for individuals, families and communities.

While much work remains to be done to manage this serious issue, I believe we can be proud of the amount accomplished to date through the efforts of dedicated and committed individuals and organizations around our province.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Brenda Locke". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Honourable Brenda Locke
Minister of State for Mental Health and Addiction Services

Introduction

Meth, jib, speed, crank, crystal, teck, zip, glass, ice and shard are just some of the names for methamphetamine – an addictive central nervous stimulant that is relatively simple to manufacture, inexpensive to purchase and risky to use.

In 2004, an increase in methamphetamine use and related deaths, combined with growing concerns of parents, teachers and front line workers, prompted the British Columbia government to develop an integrated strategy to prevent and reduce the use and supply of methamphetamine.

Released in August 2004, ***Crystal Meth & Other Amphetamines: An Integrated BC Strategy*** identified five priorities for action:

- 1. Informing the public;**
- 2. Building safer communities;**
- 3. Identifying high-risk populations;**
- 4. Increasing the skills of service providers; and**
- 5. Reducing harm to individuals.**

At the time of release, the Minister of State for Mental Health and Addiction Services committed to providing a six-month progress report on activities undertaken related to each of these priorities. This document provides that update.

ACTION 1: INFORM THE PUBLIC

The goal of activities in this area is to help increase awareness among the public and high-risk populations about methamphetamine use and its harmful impacts, and to minimize the consequences of usage through prevention, early intervention and treatment.

Examples of progress include:

- The Centre for Addictions Research of BC, at the University of Victoria, has provided an expanded section on its resources website (*Substance Information Link*, www.silink.ca) including a "*Fact Sheet on Methamphetamine*."
- The BC Partners for Mental Health and Addictions Information have produced a state-of-the-knowledge document on methamphetamine for users, families, communities and professionals (available at www.heretohelp.bc.ca).
- The Vancouver Island Health Authority has distributed key documents to its community groups and agencies, including a *Crystal Meth Summary Sheet*; an *Amphetamine Basics Fact Sheet*; and, *Methamphetamine and Amphetamine Use in Pregnancy* pamphlets.
- Peach Arch Community Services has developed an educational video on methamphetamine for school-age children and youth.
- Correctional facilities have provided inmates with information about the health effects of methamphetamine use.

Planned activities include:

- The Ministry of Children and Family Development will provide high-risk youth and community organizations with information about prevention of drug use including methamphetamine.
- The Ministry of Education will continue to include substance misuse in the revisions to the health and career education curricula.
- The Ministry of Human Resources will ensure the "*Fact Sheet on Methamphetamine*" is available at its Employment and Assistance Centres.

ACTION 2: BUILD SAFER COMMUNITIES

The goal of activities in this area is to control the supply of over-the-counter ingredients that can be used to manufacture methamphetamine, reduce the production and trafficking of the drug, and prevent crimes associated with methamphetamine use.

Examples of progress include:

- The College of Pharmacists of British Columbia has urged individual pharmacists to monitor large-quantity or more frequent purchases of pseudoephedrine-containing products, and to report any significant increases in product sales to their local RCMP or the national CrimeStoppers line.
- The Meth Watch Coalition, a group of concerned retailers and health product manufacturers, has developed and launched the Meth Watch Program, which aims to curtail the theft or purchase of over-the-counter cold remedies and other household products that can be used to produce methamphetamine. This program trains retail employees to recognize suspicious purchases and to report these to law enforcement officials through a toll-free hotline provided by the RCMP. (The training program is available at: www.methwatch.ca).
- Several community forums have been held and community task forces have been established, including:
 - the Maple Ridge/Pitt Meadows Crystal Meth Campaign and action plan initiated by the Ridge Meadows Rotary Club;
 - the South Fraser Community Services Society forum on what parents can do about the growing use of methamphetamine among youth;
 - the Mission Rotary Clubs public forum;
 - a Kelowna-based forum entitled “Crystal Meth: A Community Response”;
 - the Nanaimo Area Drug and Alcohol Action Committee public forum; and
 - a New Westminster forum that led to the establishment of a “Crystal Meth Committee.”
- The RCMP Clandestine Lab Team and the Vancouver Police Department Chemical, Biological, Radioactive and Nuclear Team have engaged in enforcement efforts to respond to methamphetamine production and trafficking.
- The National Integrated Training for First Responders on Chemical Drugs has continued its training program, and has planned additional training sessions for 2005.
- The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General is working with the federal government and police to review and develop proposals to tighten up the Controlled Drug and Substances Act regulations on precursors in the production of methamphetamine.
- The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General is working with police to respond to issues related to hazardous waste and related environmental/ health/safety issues as a result of methamphetamine production.

Priorities FOR ACTION

- The *Crime Prevention and Community Safety: Harnessing Youth Power and Perspectives in Your Local Government* meeting, jointly sponsored by the provincial and federal governments, RCMP, the Union of BC Municipalities, and the Justice Institute of BC, was held in Richmond in November 2004. The meeting focused on youth engagement, substance abuse and sustainable crime prevention, and was attended by 100 participants including youth, mayors, city councilors and municipal staff from around the province.
- The *Western Canadian Summit on Methamphetamine*, sponsored by the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority, the Federal Government and the BC Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General was held in Vancouver in November 2004 and attended by 250 delegates from BC, Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba. Delegates included individuals who use methamphetamine, family members, health service providers, law enforcement officers and front-line responders. The summit focused on the scope of the problem; public health and law enforcement issues; best practices in prevention, health promotion and interventions; and opportunities to collaborate in policy, programs and research.

ACTION 3: IDENTIFY KEY AT RISK GROUPS

The goal of activities in this area is to create a responsive service system that ensures at-risk groups are identified and that people involved in the service system have the specific skills needed to help prevent, treat and reduce methamphetamine use in these target populations.

Examples of progress include:

- The province's methamphetamine strategy has been distributed to provincial public health; early childhood development and school-based committees to help ensure women of child-bearing age understand the risks of alcohol, tobacco and illicit drug use including methamphetamine.
- The University of British Columbia and three Vancouver secondary schools have sponsored "EXPRESS", a youth-written, directed and performed play about methamphetamine usage which premiered in Vancouver on December 2, 2004.
- The Street Spirits Theatre Company has produced "Jibb", a docu-drama filmed around Prince George by youth in the North that provided a perspective on methamphetamine use and the struggle youth are experiencing regarding decisions about drug use, peer relationships and addiction.
- The Vancouver Island Health Authority has sponsored "Zine", a magazine project with a harm reduction focus that invites street-involved and other hard-to-reach groups to participate in the artwork and other aspects of the production.

ACTION 4: INCREASE SKILLS OF SERVICE PROVIDERS

The goal of activities in this area is to ensure that service providers have the skills necessary to effectively respond to the needs of individuals, families and communities.

Examples of progress include:

- The Interior Health Authority and Aboriginal Friendship Centres have partnered to ensure all staff have access to up-to-date information about methamphetamine.
- The Northern Health Authority, the Ministry of Children and Family Development and the Northern Families Health Society have collaborated in the creation of a Specialized Family Enhancement Team to help keep families together while addressing substance use issues.
- The Fraser Health Authority has developed a coordinated response among its service providers to respond to clients dealing with issues related to methamphetamine use.
- The Interior Health Authority implemented a one-day professional development workshop related to methamphetamine issues, for staff in Kelowna.
- The Vancouver Island Health Authority has implemented a series of professional development workshops for staff and physicians across the island, related to the care of clients dealing with methamphetamine use.
- The Methamphetamine Response Committee (funded by the Ministry of Community, Aboriginal and Women’s Services through the Vancouver Agreement) has created a professional training and development website for front-line responders.

Planned activities include:

- The Ministry of Children and Family Development will revise its practice guidelines for “Assessing Parental Substance Use as a Risk Factor in Child Protection Cases” and the “Protocol Framework and Working Guidelines between Child Protection and Addiction Services” to include information about methamphetamine.
- The Fraser Health Authority is developing a Best Practices for Addressing Crystal Methamphetamine and Other Emerging Drug Trends manual, which will be available electronically to a variety of internal and external stakeholders, including employers, employees and the British Columbia Employee and Family Assistance Program.
- The Vancouver Area Women’s Addictions Services Providers Network will be reviewing methamphetamine use trends in girls and women in order to guide practice issues and ensure effective support for girls and women are in place.
- Vancouver Island Health Authority is developing a teacher-training program and an educational handout for their Planning courses (formerly Career and Personal Planning) to include information about substance use issues, for distribution to schools on the island.

ACTION 5: REDUCE INDIVIDUAL HARM

The goal of activities in this area is to help individuals stay as safe and healthy as possible, and support them in informed decision-making.

In addition to the examples cited under other priorities, ongoing or planned activities include:

- The Gay Men’s Crystal Group (a working sub-committee of the Methamphetamine Response Committee) and Buzzcode (a volunteer organization that is part of the Vancouver Gay Men’s Harm Reduction Initiative) have implemented new initiatives for gay men who use methamphetamine. Buzzcode has created a unique website: www.buzzcode.org to provide harm reduction strategies for gay men who use party drugs.
- The Vancouver Area Network of Drug Users has established a jib users support group, which takes a harm reduction approach to empowering methamphetamine users to make healthier choices.
- The Ministry of Public Safety and Solicitor General has developed and implemented a Substance Abuse Program for Women Offenders in the Alouette Correctional Centre for Women, the Prince George Regional Correctional Centre, and the Surrey Pretrial Services Centre.

Conclusion

While the use of methamphetamine continues to be a concern at both the local and provincial levels, it is important to consider it within the context of other problematic substance use, including alcohol, tobacco and other illicit drugs. To do so, the provincial strategy for crystal meth was created within a larger substance use and addiction framework called *Every Door is the Right Door: BC's Planning Framework to Address Problematic Substance Use and Addiction*. (www.healthservices.gov.bc.ca/mhd/pdf/framework_for_substance_use_and_addiction.pdf)

Every Door is the Right Door acknowledges the roles a wide variety of partners play in improving both prevention and treatment services for British Columbians, particularly those in high-risk groups, and the magnitude of their efforts to reduce the profound burden of disease and harm associated with problematic substance use.

This document provides a highlight of the ongoing or planned activities to address methamphetamine production and use in British Columbia. The efforts are extensive. At the provincial, municipal, community and individual level, British Columbia is responding to this latest trend in problematic substance use.

