

WHAT YOU DON'T KNOW CAN HURT YOU METHAMPHETAMINE IN NEVADA COUNTY

REASON FOR INVESTIGATION

The Grand Jury received a number of complaints about the impact of methamphetamine (meth) on the citizens of Nevada County, especially the children. The Grand Jury chose to write this report to educate the community on how to identify the symptoms of meth use, how it affects the environment, and what programs and services are available in Nevada County. According to local law enforcement and social service agencies, crimes related to the use, possession, and manufacture of meth have reached epidemic proportions in Nevada County.

BACKGROUND

Methamphetamine, a derivative of amphetamine, is a powerful stimulant that affects the central nervous system. Amphetamines were originally intended for use in nasal decongestants and bronchial inhalers and do have limited medical applications. Meth can be smoked, snorted, orally ingested, and injected. It is accessible in many different forms and may be identified by color, which ranges from white to yellow and darker colors such as red and brown. Meth is also known as "speed" or "crystal" when it is swallowed or sniffed; as "crank" when it is injected; and as "ice", or "glass" when it is smoked.

Household products contain most of the necessary chemicals to complete the manufacturing process. Items such as Isopropyl or rubbing alcohol, brake cleaner, engine starter, drain cleaner, matches, road flares, salt, iodine, batteries, gun scrubber, MSM, sodium metal, gasoline additives, muriatic acid, farm fertilizer, lye, cold tablets containing pseudoephedrine or ephedrine, acetone, and cat litter can be used. The necessary equipment is just as common: Pyrex or Corning dishes, bottles, paper towels, coffee filters, thermometers, cheesecloth, funnels, blenders, rubber tubing, gloves, buckets, gas cans, tape, clamps, aluminum foil, propane cylinders, hotplates, plastic storage containers, ice chests, measuring cups, towels, bed sheets, and laboratory beakers.

Drain cleaner when mixed with salt produces hydrogen chloride gas for use in the final stage of meth production. The hydrogen chloride gas procedure as well as other procedures are extremely dangerous and can cause death or serious injury not only to the individuals making the meth, but also to others who may be living in an adjoining house or apartment.

Clandestine production accounts for nearly all the meth that is trafficked and abused in Nevada County.

PROCEDURE FOLLOWED

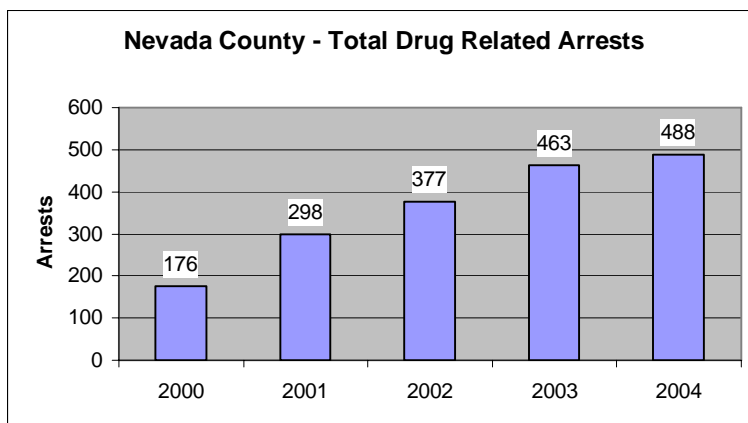
The Grand Jury reviewed documents and interviewed a complainant, representatives from the District Attorney's Office, Sheriff's Department, Grass Valley Police Department, Behavioral Health, Probation Department, a Nevada County Supervisor and a methamphetamine addict, who has been clean and sober for two years. The Grand Jury attended a session of Adult Drug Court as well as a Substance Abuse Task Force meeting.

Sources:

1. 2001-2002 Mendocino County Grand Jury report on methamphetamine
2. Southeast Missouri State University report entitled "Meth and Health"
3. Drug Enforcement Agency, "Drug Intelligence Brief: The Forms of Methamphetamine" April 2002 www.streetdrugs.org/methamphetamine.htm
4. National Institute on Drug Abuse www.nida.nih.gov/Infobox/methamphetamine.html

FINDINGS

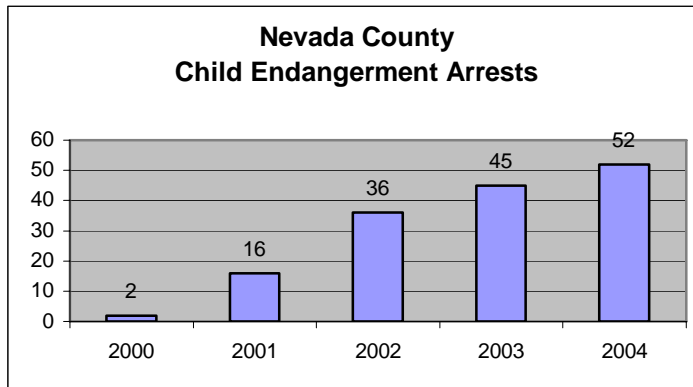
1. The following chart shows the growth in drug related arrests in Nevada County from 2000 thru 2004.



2. Methamphetamine usage can result in hyperactivity, disturbed sleep patterns, irritability, paranoia, aggressive behavior, shortness of breath, involuntary muscle movements, malnutrition, and severe depression with suicidal tendencies. Chronic users may develop sores on their bodies from scratching at "crank bugs," which describes the common delusion that bugs are crawling under the skin. Long term use may lead to fatal kidney and lung disease, brain damage, liver damage, stroke, lowered resistance to illnesses and permanent psychological problems.
3. Methamphetamine is one of the most addictive drugs. It is potentially addictive from the first use.

4. After methamphetamine use is stopped, several withdrawal symptoms can occur, including depression, anxiety, fatigue, paranoia, aggression, and an intense craving for the drug. Psychotic symptoms can sometimes persist for months or years after use has ceased.
5. Many of the items required to produce methamphetamine are readily available at the local grocery and hardware store. Because many of the chemicals used to make meth are explosive, caustic and known carcinogens, they pose serious health hazards if ingested. The chemicals can create dangerous gases, fire or explosions if mixed together or stored improperly.
6. With an investment of \$200 to \$300, a batch of methamphetamine can be manufactured (cooked) and sold for a street value of approximately \$8,000.
7. The potential risk to the environment is significant. The ratio of waste materials to finished product is approximately 6 to 1. For every pound of methamphetamine manufactured there are six pounds of toxic waste materials that must be disposed. Meth producers have been known to leave waste at the site, dump it into streams and rivers, spread it out over open fields, dump into sewage systems or leave it in garbage bags for the local trash collector. Motel or hotel rooms may be used for the purpose of manufacturing meth. This may result in toxic fumes that expose other guests and the cleaning staff to health hazards. The chemical vapors produced during the manufacturing process permeate the walls and carpets, making them uninhabitable. Cleaning up these sites requires specialized training and costs an average of \$2,000-\$4,000 per site in funds that come out of the already-strained budgets of state and local police.
8. The manufacture of methamphetamine is hard to prevent as the process is simple and involves uncomplicated equipment and supplies. A producer can set up a lab in a garage, bathroom or kitchen of a residence, a small shed, or in a vehicle. They often cook up a batch and then move on.
9. Methamphetamine use during pregnancy results in a higher risk of premature births, babies with low birth weight, cardiac blockages and birth defects. The use of meth during pregnancy impacts the fetus by reducing blood flow or by a direct toxic effect on the developing brain.
10. Children who are exposed to methamphetamine via second hand smoke can have detectable levels of meth found in their urine. They are often subjected to physical and emotional neglect as a result of addicted parents. Children who are legally removed from a meth environment cannot take their clothing and toys due to contamination.
11. Many Child Protective Service and domestic violence cases are directly related to the use of methamphetamine by a parent or family member. The following chart

shows the growth in child endangerment arrests in Nevada County from 2000 thru 2004.



12. Substance abuse programs available in Nevada County include:
 - a. Community Recovery Resources (<http://www.corr.us/corrservices.htm>)
 - b. Hope House (<http://www.corr.us/hopehouse.htm>)
 - c. Progress House (formerly Lovett House)
 - d. Mothers in Recovery (Behavioral Health)
 - e. The Probation Department gives an educational and informative presentation to schools and other groups in Nevada County.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Education is the primary weapon that must be used to combat the methamphetamine epidemic. The Grand Jury strongly recommends the Substance Abuse Task Force continue in its education of the citizens of Nevada County.
2. Agencies that deal with families who are affected by methamphetamine must share information and work together to provide ongoing needed services.
3. Community members should assist law enforcement in uncovering methamphetamine labs by being aware of suspicious odors, trash, and unusual traffic flow in their neighborhoods through neighborhood watch programs, homeowners associations, etc.
4. All agencies should encourage and cooperate with citizens' methamphetamine suppression efforts. Agencies should expand efforts to inform community residents about the meth problem and how to deal with it, and where possible to provide resources for community meth suppression efforts.

NO RESPONSE REQUIRED