

## Denver Post Project attacks meth use in Colo. with startling ads

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More than a third of Colorado young adults and 20 percent of teenagers say they have access to methamphetamine, according to a statewide survey.

While 91 percent of teens disapprove of taking the drug, 24 percent say their friends wouldn't give them a hard time if they did, and 30 percent say they haven't tried to dissuade their friends from taking the highly addictive drug.

One in 10 teens say someone has offered them the drug, while 32 percent of adults between ages 18 and 24 say they have been offered meth.

These results aren't shocking to the Colorado Meth Project, which is working to reduce the number of first-time meth users. The campaign commissioned the survey of 600 teens and 400 young adults.

"A teenage girl told me meth was easier to get than alcohol and cheaper than marijuana," said Dr. Nicolas Taylor, a clinical psychologist and drug-treatment specialist in Montrose, who volunteers for the group.

The Meth Project, a nonprofit organization that started in Montana four years ago and has expanded to five other states, including Colorado, uses radio, TV, billboards, the Internet and grassroots community outreach to get across its core message: "Not Even Once."

The ads have been somewhat controversial because of their graphic, brutally realistic portrayal of teenagers and young adults on meth: sores and bruises all over their face and arms, smoking, snorting or shooting meth, stealing, and selling their bodies. In many ads, young meth users look back at how they used to be when they were healthy and recall saying they were just going to try meth once.

Kent MacLennan, the executive director of the Colorado campaign, said the ads have gone through significant focus-group testing and are targeted to cut through all the "clutter" in young adults' and teenagers' lives to grab their attention.

"We want the ads to be compelling but accurate," he said, and noted that the media campaign tries to reach 70 to 80 percent of teens three times a week. "We can't sugarcoat it."

Colorado ranks eighth in the country for per-capita meth use, according to the Rand Drug Policy Research Center. State Attorney General John Suthers has estimated the cost to the state is roughly \$1.4 billion a year.

Colorado, like a number of intermountain states, has a disproportionate number of meth users because of its proximity to Mexico, where so-called "super labs" are manufacturing huge quantities of meth.

Meth is derived from amphetamine and is commonly made using ephedrine or pseudoephedrine, which is found in over-the-counter medicines. Other common household products added to the manufacturing process include fertilizer, nail-polish remover, lye, drain cleaner and brake fluid.

The drug unnaturally raises dopamine levels to more than 10 times the amount caused by life's normal pleasures, including eating and having sex.