



KCNC-TV
Gov. Launches Aggressive Meth Awareness Project

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A new statewide awareness campaign to prevent people from trying methamphetamine involves graphic ads depicting the consequences of using the drug.

Colorado ranks eighth in the country for total meth users 12 and over. Nearly one-third of all drug-related offenses in Colorado in 2007 were due to meth. That's 56 percent higher than the national average.

Seventy percent of all the counties in Colorado reported an increase in foster care placements because of meth use.

The Colorado Meth Project campaign launched Thursday is an aggressive one. Organizers will use television, radio, print and Internet media to get their message out.

The campaign's core message is "Not Even Once," speaking to the highly addictive nature of the drug and how it's one of the hardest to treat.

Gov. Bill Ritter and Attorney General John Suthers warned that adults might find some of the advertisements offensive. But they said the ads need to honestly portray the damage done by meth to reach their target audience -- teens and young adults.

Kent MacLennan, executive director of the Colorado Meth Project, said all the ads have been tested in focus groups with teens and young adults. They said the ads should be realistic but not exaggerated.

"For kids who have just finished playing Grand Theft Auto, these are not overly graphic," he said.

Cindy Gray knows the pain of meth use. Her son, 23, killed himself after struggling four years on the drug. She wishes a program like this existed when her son was alive.

"To have this knowledge is awesome," said Gray. "It's going to prevent a lot of kids from trying this not even once. Because the first time my son did meth, that was the beginning of the end of his life."

The meth project first launched in 2005 in Montana. That state had ranked fifth in the country when it came to meth use. Just two years after the program launched it dropped to 39th.

Ritter says he hopes it has the same effect in Colorado.

The program will cost about \$4 million a year. Most of it is paid for with grants from private foundations, but about 20 percent is being paid through a federal grant.