

UPDATE OF THE CENTRAL OKANAGAN CRYSTAL METH TASK FORCE OCTOBER 2006

BACKGROUND

In the spring of 2006, the Living Positive Resource Centre of Kelowna spearheaded the formation of a Crystal Meth Task Force to combat the manufacture, trafficking and use of crystal methamphetamine, following a successful model implemented in Victoria's School District 61.

The necessity for this task force became evident through a homelessness count in Kelowna totaling 420 people. The survey found substance abuse, including crystal meth use, one of the most frequent reasons for homelessness. Research from the RCMP over the past five years shows an alarming rise in youth using crystal meth. The McCreary Centre Report in 2003 already indicated that 6% of Okanagan high school students had used crystal meth. If we use enrollment data from September of this year, that would be the equivalent of 13 classrooms of approximately 30 students each. Adding alternative school students to this would increase the number to about 20 classrooms. This does not include school age students not enrolled in school who are using crystal meth and we know that severely dependent user generally do not remain in school.

Crystal meth related crimes are also increasing at a substantial rate. These are all clear indicators that this devastating drug has taken hold in the Central Okanagan and has produced a 'home grown' problem.

UPDATE OF INITIAL GOALS

The following is a list of the initial goals with an update of work completed to date, work in progress, as well as future recommendations:

Community and Public Awareness

Research and build information resources for use by the task force

- This goal was met through the facilitator, as well as individuals from the Education and Treatment Pillars of the task force, for example material from other task forces was collected and reviewed, as well as a comprehensive literature review with respect to crystal meth treatment was conducted.

Build a speakers bureau, supporting materials and coordinate presentations to broad range of community audiences / sectors

- In progress – names are being collected of individuals willing to speak. These names will be part of a database to match appropriate speakers with target audiences. Much of the supporting material has already been developed.

Lead media and public relations, facilitate information flow within the task force

- Ongoing and met through role of the facilitator.

Coordinate events, provide writing and research support, manage publication production, prepare media relations material

- Met through the role of the facilitator, along with volunteer members from the task force.
- Events include a media campaign planned for the fall, a community forum with Dr. Gabore Mate, author of “Hold on to your kids”, crystal meth awareness booths at the “Live Free Campaign” kick-off, Professional Development Conference for SD23 teachers, a booth at the BC P.A.C. Conference, Addiction Week Awareness events at UBCO and OC.

**Education Pillar
Panel Committee**

To design and develop an age appropriate presentation outlining the scope of the problem and the impact of crystal meth on one’s health

- A power point presentation has been developed and has been accepted by SD23, only requiring minor changes.
- The task force continues to liaise with SD23 regarding other ways to assist with education and a wide range of material has been approved, including posters, brochures and flyers.

To provide two opportunities for parents to attend identical presentations

- Plans are currently being firmed up to bring Dr. Gabore Mate, author of “Hold on to your kids” back to Kelowna again for a second public presentation. This will be planned through liaising with the PAC’s, thus ensuring a large audience of parents.

To deliver presentations to youth in SD23

- Due to the school district’s stringent approval process, presentations to youth are not yet occurring, however, a wide range of material developed and / or gathered by the task force has been approved by SD23. Presentations will occur ‘in house’, potentially by a new position and along with the School District’s own material.

Education Pillar

Follow-up Committee

To create a resource package to accompany the panel presentations as a follow-up to the initial contact (including hand-outs, surveys, projects, student activities)

- Again, due to the school district's stringent approval process, this goal was met in a slightly different way. A range of material was developed and approved by SD23 including a power point presentation, brochures, pamphlets and lanyards.

To liaise with the other pillars and committees within the task force to access all information needed to be included in the resource package

- Other pillars and committees were liaised with throughout the process, which resulted in sharing of resources and also re-structuring of committees as required to increase effectiveness.

To liaise with school staff to assist them in utilizing the resource package within the classroom

- Members of the 90 day task force liaised with Greg Walker from SD23 throughout the approval process for the material presented. To date the material has been approved with only minor modifications necessary. Again, utilization of the material at this stage will occur 'in house'.

To liaise with the community for other resources to include in the package

- Liaising with the community was ongoing. As well, other communities were consulted in terms of their initiatives and materials.

Design a follow-up package deliverable several months later

- Until the school district has made use of the material provided and has implemented their own program, a follow-up package is not appropriate, however, on-going liaising will provide an avenue for follow-up when appropriate.

Education Pillar Materials Committee

To collect existing educational resources from other crystal meth presentations

- Other resources from various communities were collected, examined, and utilized as appropriate.

To create educational resources such as: posters, brochures, audio materials

- This goal has been completed through the development of a brochure for teachers, a brochure for students, posters, flyers, lanyards, stickers, and a power-point presentation.

To catalog materials and make them easily accessible

- The facilitator of the crystal meth task force has a list and samples of materials currently available.

To post as much information on the website www.yourlifeormeth.com as possible

- A great deal of information has been posted on the website, along with links to other programs and materials. The website is currently updated by members of the Education Pillar and plans are being put in place to ensure ongoing maintenance of the site.

**Education Pillar
UBCO / OC Committee**

To create multiple exposures to crystal meth information

- Members of the task force have liaised with both UBCO and OC to facilitate distribution of the material available. Further events are planned for the fall to tie in with Addiction Awareness Week in November and the Media Campaign of the Task Force to be launched the middle of October.

Advertise crystal meth information and the website in school publication, radio stations, and print advertising throughout the campus

- This sub-committee has been liaising with campus publications to facilitate the distribution of crystal meth information. In addition, the fall media campaign will facilitate distribution of information utilizing all media. This will provide the opportunity for a layered marketing campaign including events throughout the city.

Liaise with students to include peer involvement

- Members of the sub-committee of the task force are students themselves and are therefore able to engage their peers in upcoming awareness campaigns.

**Treatment Pillar
First Response Committee**

To engage community services and professionals to identify gaps in service

- Gaps in service were identified after an inventory of existing services was completed. Community services organizations and a range of professionals assisted with this process.

To engage crystal meth users in accessing services

- Through the development of a comprehensive chart outlining existing services, along with the recommendation that service providers share information on a more formal basis, it is anticipated that users will be more easily engaged in services.
- Other research conducted to better facilitate the creation of a comprehensive treatment model should also assist with this goal.

To match types of services to needs of meth users

- Part of the research conducted to better understand the unique need of crystal meth users led to the conclusion that gaps in services do exist that need to be addressed. Available services can be matched to needs, however, some needs are simply not being met at this time.

**Treatment Pillar
Post-treatment Committee**

Create a comprehensive report, including successful support / rehabilitation models for crystal meth users, existing post-treatment services/ resources, and gaps in post-treatment services / resources

To meet this goal, the committees created the following:

- A comprehensive chart of services currently in place, including first response, treatment, post-treatment, and post-treatment housing. The chart is further broken down into services for youth, adult males, and adult females.
- A list of 9 recommendations for improved services based on an inventory of existing services.
- Two documents to serve as a foundation for the creation of a comprehensive evidence based continuum of treatment options. These are:
 - “Towards a comprehensive evidence based continuum of treatment for methamphetamine use and dependence: **Document I** – An outline to be used as a tool for developing a comprehensive treatment model.”
 - “Towards a comprehensive evidence based continuum of treatment for methamphetamine use and dependence: **Document II** – A review of the literature and other evidence.

Liaise with other pillars, committees within the task force and service providers within the community to identify needs of crystal meth addicts, their families and communities.

- Members of other pillars and committees were consulted and being kept informed throughout the process, as well as a wide range of service providers, some of which are members of the Treatment Pillar.

Develop a 'reconnection' plan for addicts, their families and communities to help individuals return to a healthy, productive lifestyle

- Recommendations for this goal are outlined in the documents listed above.

**Enforcement Pillar
By-Law Committee**

The By-Law Committee of the Enforcement Pillar outlined the following objectives:

1. Educate local municipal councils on the dangers and risks brought to a community with the existence of a clandestine laboratory
2. Develop and help implement by-laws that directly relate costs of policing and remediation of clandestine laboratories to the property owners who foster the illegal uses
3. Conduct research with a goal to developing other by-laws that will assist local municipal councils to dissuade manufacturers from establishing a clandestine laboratory in their jurisdiction
4. Promote the support of other programs associated with the sales and storage of precursor chemicals

These objectives were met as follows:

- The City of Kelowna has had a by-law in place for the past year which has been successfully used 3 times to date. Our surrounding regional district and municipalities do not have this by-law in place and it is recommended they consider adopting it. To this end a letter has been drafted to other regions, making them aware of this by-law and its implementation in Kelowna.
- The issue of programs to address sale and storage of pre-cursors is being addressed through the "Meth Watch Program". The implementation of this program will be followed up on by the Education Pillar. A list of stores has been created which sell pre-cursors and some have already been contacted. The program will be implemented fully in the fall along with the media campaign.

**Enforcement Pillar
Distribution Committee**

The following objectives were outlined:

1. Identify traffickers, manufacturers and users of this drug
2. Training of police, fire, paramedics and hospital personnel in the dangers of and proper responses to those involved in the crystal meth culture

3. Develop an understanding of the numbers of individuals using the drug and the associated crime patterns
4. Develop a swift response to reports of individuals manufacturing and trafficking in crystal meth

These objectives were met as follows:

- A meeting of senior officials from RCMP, Fire, EMS and Interior Health (ER) responsible for training was set up on August 24/06 where training information was shared. Suggestions were also received for further cross-training and the establishment of decontamination procedure protocols.

Enforcement Pillar Precursor Committee

The following objectives were outlined:

1. Help curtail the theft and suspicious purchases of pseudo-ephedrine products and other common household commodities used in the illicit manufacturing of methamphetamine
2. Promote cooperation between retailers and law enforcement agencies to prevent the diversion of legitimate products for illegal use

These objectives were addressed as follows:

- The RCMP will work in-house with their Loss Prevention Officer to ensure education material and recommended guidelines are available, but it was determined that the implementation of these objectives really lies with the Education Pillar.
- The Education Pillar is meeting these objectives through the implementation of the “Meth Watch” program as previously indicated.

Enforcement Pillar Judicial Liaison Committee

The objective of this committee was to:

1. Obtain data as to how seriously crystal meth is being dealt with by the courts in sentencing of users and producers, and ensure that the crystal meth problem is clearly identified in sentencing (users and producers)

This objective was met as follows:

- The Court Watch program has been asked to be aware of, watch and follow crystal meth cases so statistics can lead to future recommendations, for example alternative sentencing, etc.

FOLLOW-UP / SUMMARY

The work of the task force is continuing as evidenced by this update of the initial goals. Some re-structuring of committees has already occurred and more is anticipated as initiatives still to be completed may no longer warrant the amount of committees and sub-committees initially struck.

Here is a summary of tasks yet to be completed:

- Formation of a speakers database and related training
- Editing of materials approved for SD23
- Contacting private schools regarding use of the material available through this task force
- Liaising with PAC's to facilitate a public forum with Dr. Gabore Mate
- Educational events at UBCO and OC
- Ongoing management of the website www.yourlifeormeth.com
- A comprehensive fall media campaign including print, radio, TV and web
- Investigate a partnership with a local fast food restaurant to hand out materials as part of the fall media campaign
- Liaise with Drug and Alcohol Services (IHA) to ascertain how the task force can assist with the creation of a comprehensive continuum of services