State of Colorado

Methamphetamine Task Force

First Annual Report

January 2007

John Suthers
Colorado Attorney General
Task Force Chair

This report is respectfully submitted to the judiciary committees of the Senate and the House of Representatives of the General Assembly of the State of Colorado in accordance with Colorado Revised Statute § 18-18.5-103(6)(d)(I-III).

John Suthers, Chair
Colorado Attorney General

Lori Moriarity, Vice Chair, Criminal Justice System
Commander, Thornton Police Department, North Metro Drug Task Force

Janet Wood, Vice Chair, Treatment
Director, Colorado Department of Human Services, Behavioral Health Services, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division and Division of Mental Health

José Esquibel, Vice Chair, Prevention
Director, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Interagency Prevention Systems

I. Introduction

Of the various drugs that are abused by people in the State of Colorado, methamphetamine is the one drug for which there is a verifiable increase in use over the course of the past three years. Methamphetamine use in Colorado has increased two to three percent higher than the national average among youth ages 18-25. The data for Colorado shows that females are using methamphetamine in almost the same proportion as men with a specific increase in the Hispanic population. This has specific implications for the health, well-being and safety for children of mothers who use methamphetamine, but in general children are the most endangered population when a methamphetamine lab is present in the home.

Several Colorado communities have responded in various ways to address methamphetamine production and abuse, including the formation of specific drug or methamphetamine task forces, coordinated responses between law enforcement and human services, and referrals to treatment. In this respect, some communities are ahead of the State in addressing methamphetamine abuse and related problems, and are working together to address the problem.

Because problems associated with methamphetamine abuse are complex, a comprehensive and coordinated response at the State and local level is essential to effectively deal with the problems at hand and to reverse the increasing trends associated with methamphetamine as documented in law enforcement data, treatment data, drug trends, child welfare data, etc.

The good news is that the number of methamphetamine labs in Colorado has decreased in the last three years likely due to the passage of stricter laws associated with the sale of precursors in the production of methamphetamine, and better communications between law enforcement and communities. Also, treatment services in Colorado are seeing success in working with people addicted to methamphetamine when persons are engaged in treatment for adequate periods of time and adaptations are made to retain them in treatment. Treatment is one of the more cost effective ways to address methamphetamine abuse and addiction.

The Colorado General Assembly acknowledges the need for involving a diverse partnership of state government, local governments, and the private sectors, including legislators, child advocates, public health officials, drug treatment providers, child welfare workers, law enforcement officers, judges, and prosecutors. To this end, legislation was passed in 2006 to establish a State Methamphetamine Task Force with a mandate to:

1. Assist local communities with implementation of the most effective practices to respond to illegal methamphetamine production, distribution, and use;

2. Develop statewide strategies in collaboration with local communities to address prevention, intervention, treatment and enforcement; and

3. Take a comprehensive approach to and provide assistance and recommendations concerning prevention, intervention and treatment and the response of the criminal justice system to the methamphetamine problem in Colorado.

II. Formation of the Task Force

John Suthers, Colorado Attorney General, serves as Chair of the State Methamphetamine Task Force, as specified in House Bill 06-1145, C.R.S. 18-18.5-103.

Lori Moriarity, Commander of the North Metro Drug Task Force, Thornton Police Department, serves as Vice Chair for the Criminal Justice System by appointed of Governor Bill Owens. Commander Moriarity is also the President of the National Alliance of Drug Endangered Children.

Janet Wood, Director of Behavioral Health Services, Colorado Department of Human Services, serves as Vice Chair for Treatment by appointment of Andrew Romanoff, Speaker of the House of Representatives. Ms. Wood also is a member of the National Advisory Council on Drug Abuse and the White House's Advisory Commission on Drug Free Communities.

José Esquibel, Director of Interagency Prevention Systems, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, serves as Vice Chair for Prevention by appointment of Joan Fitzgerald, President of the Senate. Mr. Esquibel is also chair of the Colorado Prevention Leadership Council, a five state department interagency council that coordinates state-managed prevention, intervention and treatment services for children and youth.

Jeanne Smith, Deputy Attorney General, provides support for Attorney General Suthers and is the point person for coordinating the activities of the State Methamphetamine Task Force.

In July and August 2006, the members of the Task Force were identified in accordance with the requirements of C.R.S. 18-18.5-103. As of December 2006, there are twenty-seven official members of the State Methamphetamine Task Force. The list of current members is found in Appendix A of this report.

Since its inception, the State Methamphetamine Task Force has held three meetings on the following days:

- July 25, 2006, 9:00a.m. – 12:00 p.m., Office of the Attorney General
- September 12, 2006, 10:00a.m. – 11:00 p.m., Office of the Attorney General

- November 14, 2006, 10:00a.m. – 1:00 p.m., Office of the Attorney General

The meeting agendas included information from Task Force members and others throughout the state regarding on-going local, state, and national efforts. A summary was provided about the work being done by the Drug Endangered Children organization and Task Force members provided information from national conferences held in Georgia and Utah concerning responses to methamphetamine problems. The Fourth Judicial District Task Force discussed their coordination with the Drug Court Program on establishing a "48/7" standard that results in persons receiving their first treatment contact within forty-eight hours of arrest and a second visit within seven days. Work in Mesa County was presented, including the 2004 "white paper" available online at methfree.mesacounty.us. In this study, Mesa County reports that 80% of the jailed inmates admitted to being high on methamphetamine at the time of their arrest. As a result of the study, the county will construct a three-story facility that will include forty-eight beds for drug addiction treatment. Mesa County is also partnering with local organizations to establish educational programs to promote healthy lifestyles. Committees were formed locally to address the problems faced by foster parents dealing with meth-exposed children and the problems related to environmental clean-up.

In an effort to include perspectives from those individuals in treatment programs, the Task Force heard from a recovering addict who used and abused methamphetamine for eleven years. This person stated that her family and friends were the influences that she felt were most important in her recovery. She also described how she had manipulated drug testing and faked her way through other treatment programs over the course of those prior years. This woman was pregnant at the time of her addiction but now has full custody of her twins as a result of her recovery.

The Task Force discussed at length the broad impact of methamphetamine abuse on the child welfare system, law enforcement, the environment, business, and the public. Future meetings will include more information-gathering from local, state, and national sources to help refine the focus for Colorado.

In addition, the Vice-Chairs met every other week during the months of July 2006 through November 2006 and consulted with the Attorney General on implementing and coordinating the initial activities of the Task Force in accordance with the mandates of the legislation.

The members of the State Methamphetamine Task Force established two committees, a Funding Committee and Data Committee, which are both discussed below.

III. Identified Priorities and Expectations

After reviewing the requirements outlined in C.R.S. 18-18.5-103(4-5), the members of the Task Force agreed upon the following three priorities for 2007:

1. Utilize data to specifically identify problems and issues related to methamphetamine in the State of Colorado, and utilize the data for guiding the work of the State Methamphetamine Task Force in assisting communities in implementing effective approaches for methamphetamine prevention, intervention and treatment, and environmental cleanup.

2. Review model programs that have shown the best results in Colorado and across the United States and provide information on the programs to local communities and local drug task forces.

3. Investigate collaborative models on protecting children and other victims of methamphetamine production, distribution, and abuse.

Toward addressing and accomplishing these priorities, the Task Force then identified the following specific expectations:

1. Maintain a comprehensive and broad systems approach in addressing and responding to methamphetamine abuse and related issues, in particular, of drug-endangered children, including the identification of long-term solutions.

2. Paint the picture of methamphetamine abuse issues in the State of Colorado utilizing data from a variety of state and local sources and the findings from latest research about methamphetamine abuse.

3. Produce as "State of the State Report Card" for the State Methamphetamine Task Force and the State Legislature and articulate a multiple-pronged approach involving prevention, detection, intervention and treatment.

4. Educate stakeholders about methamphetamine issues and problems in order to engage them in addressing the issues and to make informed decisions.
    a. Determine how best to communicate to various audiences about the work of the State Methamphetamine Task Force and the problems surrounding methamphetamine abuse based on facts derived from data and local experiences.
    b. Develop a group of speakers who will help talk comprehensively about methamphetamine abuse.
    c. Separate fact from fiction regarding methamphetamine abuse and related problems.

d. Understand what other states have done to address methamphetamine issues.

5. Educate and report to the public on the efforts to address methamphetamine abuse in the State of Colorado, including utilizing the findings from the Report to the Legislature.

6. Form partnerships in the areas of prevention, detection, intervention and treatment, and environmental cleanup.

7. Establish a blueprint that will assist in comprehensively addressing other drugs of abuse and their effects on communities and families that include community planning and reasonable outcomes that can be achieved by communities.

8. Create a network of individuals and organizations that will inform our work and be a sounding board for the work of the State Methamphetamine Task Force (i.e. local coalitions, representatives of rural communities, community leaders).

9. Create a coordinated and consistent message regarding how to effectively address methamphetamine abuse and drug endangered children.

10. Collect and compile the best ideas from across the State of Colorado and the nation on approaches to address methamphetamine abuse and drug endangered children.

11. Identify resources needed for supporting local communities in implementing the most effective models and practices for methamphetamine prevention, intervention and treatment, environmental cleanup and criminal justice responses.

The above priorities and expectations will guide the work of the State Methamphetamine Task Force in 2007.

IV. Funding

El Pomar Foundation, under the direction of William J. Hybl, Chairman and CEO, has pledged $50,000 to support the work of the State Methamphetamine Task Force. An amount of $12,500 was received for 2006, $25,000 will be awarded in 2007, and the remaining $12,500 will be for use in 2008.

V. Data Committee

The members of the State Methamphetamine Task Force prioritized the need for data in order to understand the issues and trends related to methamphetamine production, distribution, use, and related problems specific to Colorado. The members of the State Methamphetamine Task Force agreed that a data committee take on the work of reviewing and analyzing data from various sources in order to "paint a picture' of methamphetamine issues in Colorado.

Because there was already an existing methamphetamine data sub-committee operational within a state government grant project (Colorado Prevention Leadership Council/ Colorado Prevention Partners), it was decided to utilize this group and expand membership to include representatives of other partners with an interest in data collection related to methamphetamine issues.

The Colorado Prevention Partners is a grant project awarded to the Office of the Governor in 2004 and managed by the Colorado Prevention Leadership Council, a five state department interagency collaborative group. One of the requirements of the grant is the formation of a State Epidemiological Workgroup consisting of data experts from various state departments. The funds from the grant assisted in developing an infrastructure for collecting and analyzing data that is housed in various data systems across state government and local communities, and sharing data findings with state department representatives in order to prioritize funding of services. After conducting some initial work in the area of alcohol and drug abuse in general, a sub-committee was formed to begin looking at data related to methamphetamine production, distribution, arrests, trends in use, and treatment.

Through agreement and coordination, the Colorado Prevention Partners Methamphetamine data sub-committee also took on the role of serving as the State Methamphetamine Task Force Data Committee, thus consolidating state processes with a common focus and not duplicating efforts.

The Data Committee is co-chaired by Vice Chairs José Esquibel and Janet Wood, and the staff of OMNI Institute took the lead in coordinating the various tasks and activities of the Data Committee. The members of the Data Committee are listed in Appendix B, and represent over twelve state agencies and organizations. The Data Committee met four times over the course of several months to identify methamphetamine data sources across the state and to analyze preliminary data that was accessible. The dates of these meetings were as follows:

- September 5, 2006
- October 2, 2006
- November 2, 2006
- November 20, 2006

A summary of the data findings are presented in the following section.

VI. Findings and Recommendations

a. Summary of Data Findings

From September 2006 through November 2006, the Methamphetamine Data Committee targeted efforts in three main areas of work. The first priority was to identify known data sources and systems throughout the state that maintain data related to methamphetamine and its related effects. Secondly, the Data Committee created and distributed an online, web-based Methamphetamine Data Inventory Survey to state agencies, non-profit organizations, and key data administrators across Colorado. The purpose of the Methamphetamine Data Inventory Survey was to gather specific information on the data sources and systems that systematically collect data on methamphetamine. This online web survey was forwarded to more than forty agencies. The resulting information collected was informative and representative, as more than 60% of respondents completed the survey. As a result, the Data Committee was able to enhance understanding of methamphetamine data collection efforts, obtain standardized data collection tools, and recognize the need for enhanced, cross-agency data system integration as related to methamphetamine data collection.

Finally, the first major accomplishment of the Data Committee was the collection and presentation of available national, state, and regional data on methamphetamine to the State Methamphetamine Task Force on November 14, 2006. The Data Committee presented and interpreted key methamphetamine data and trends from sources such as the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division of the Department of Human Services, the Colorado Drug Endangered Children Report, and the Colorado Youth Risk Behavior Survey. The data was also compared to national trends from The National Survey on Drug Use and Health, The Drug Abuse Warning Network, and the National Drug Intelligence Center.

Overall, the data indicates that Colorado is experiencing an increase in methamphetamine use, as evidenced by the increasing treatment admission rate from 8% in 2000 to 19% in 2005. Colorado has a higher percentage of persons aged twelve or older reporting past year methamphetamine use from 2002- 2005, as compared to the national average reported by the National Survey on Drug Use and Health. Additionally, in 2003 only 17% of sentenced offenders nationwide were sentenced with methamphetamine as a primary drug type, while that percentage was over 1.5 times higher in Colorado with 28% of sentenced offenders using methamphetamine as the primary drug, as reported in the United States Sentencing Committee Report.

Another key finding is the role of Colorado's unique geography in affecting both methamphetamine distribution and user patterns. In 2006, the National Drug Assessment Report identified Denver, Colorado, as a principal methamphetamine drug distribution center. This is likely due to the intersection of major highways and the high levels of

trafficking from Mexico. The regional patterns of methamphetamine use in Colorado demonstrate the disproportionate burden of methamphetamine use in rural areas as evidenced by the 7% to 22% increase in methamphetamine treatment admissions for Colorado rural clients.

Methamphetamine is also affecting sub-populations within Colorado at increased rates. One of these sub-populations that is at greater risk is the men who have sex with men (MSM) population. Research from the Colorado Outcomes Study found that MSM used methamphetamine at higher rates than their heterosexual counterparts. Furthermore, MSM who used methamphetamine were more likely to be diagnosed with gonorrhea and HIV, as compared to MSM who did not engage in methamphetamine use. An additional sub-population identified and of concern is that of Drug Endangered Children. Children who are exposed to methamphetamine labs or have caregivers who are users are at higher risks of chemical contamination, extreme negative health outcomes, injury and death. In 2005, the Colorado North Metro Task Force reported thirty-eight methamphetamine incidents, yet over seventy-eight children were present at the time of those incidents illustrating the exponential effect that methamphetamine use has on children.

However, despite these statistics, the data show that treatment for methamphetamine users is effective and results are comparable to, and sometimes better than, treatment for other drug users. Colorado's Statewide Treatment Admissions Demographics show that methamphetamine users who enter treatment make up 19% of total admissions and are most commonly white, between 25-34 years of age, and began using at age twenty-one. The treatment effectiveness rates for methamphetamine users are similar to that of cocaine users with similar rates of short-term treatment outcomes, clinical impressions, and behavioral frequencies, despite anecdotal stories to the contrary. In addition, with implementation of researched treatment models, such as the Matrix model and contingency management, the outlook for effective treatment for methamphetamine users is even more encouraging.

b. General recommendations

Based on the information collected, analyzed, and presented by the State Methamphetamine Task Force Data Committee, the group has developed the following recommendations and next steps:

- Create and increase capacity of interagency data collection systems to link in order to allow for more thorough and accurate surveillance and data collection on methamphetamine

- Conduct an evidence literature review of programs, practices, and policies that have been shown to impact methamphetamine use.

- Interview key local stakeholders to understand local efforts that are taking place and share information with other areas, particularly rural areas that may have limited funding to deal with such issues

- Develop a cost savings/cost avoidance model that illustrates the monetary burden methamphetamine use has on various state systems and the dollars that would be saved by prevention, intervention and treatment efforts.

VII. Priority Issues for 2007

The issues of priority to be studied in upcoming State Methamphetamine Task Force meetings are based on the priorities described above in Section III. The most immediate activities based on those priorities include the following:

- Identify the specific efforts of Colorado communities, and local and state government, in addressing methamphetamine abuse and related problems. This will include efforts in prevention, intervention, treatment, law enforcement, criminal justice, child welfare, and environmental clean-up.

- Based on a review of these efforts, identify and describe what is working well in communities and determine how these activities can be adopted and adapted across the State of Colorado.

- Review and identify evidence-based approaches from other states for addressing methamphetamine abuse and related problems, and develop recommendations for implementation of effective approaches in Colorado communities.

- Investigate collaborative models on protecting children and other victims of methamphetamine production, distribution, and abuse.

- Establish a blueprint that will assist in comprehensively addressing other drugs of abuse and their effects on communities and families that include community planning and reasonable outcomes that can be achieved by communities.

- Create a coordinated and consistent message regarding how to effectively address methamphetamine abuse and drug endangered children.

- Educate stakeholders about methamphetamine issues and problems in order to engage them in addressing the issues and to make informed decisions.

VIII. Legislative Proposals of the Task Force

At this time, there are no legislative proposals to the General Assembly from the State Methamphetamine Task Force.

Appendix A

Membership
State Methamphetamine Task Force

Chair

Attorney General John Suthers

Vice-Chairs

Treatment: Janet Wood, Director, Behavioral Health Services, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division and Division of Mental Health, Colorado Department of Human Services

Prevention: José Esquibel, Director, Interagency Prevention Systems, Prevention Services Division, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment

Criminal Justice: Lori Moriarty, Commander, Thornton Police Department, North Metro Drug Task Force

Members

President of the Senate Designee: Dave Thomas, Director, Colorado District Attorneys Council

Senate Minority Leader Designee: Senator Shawn Mitchell

Speaker of the House Designee: Carmelita Muniz, Director, Colorado Association of Alcohol and Drug Service Providers

House Minority Leader Designee: Representative Bob McCluskey

Statewide Child Advocacy: Tara Trujillo, Colorado Children's Campaign

Major Health Facility: Dr. Kathryn Wells, Denver Health

Human Service Agency, Child Welfare: Ted Trujillo, Director, Division of Child Welfare, Colorado Department of Human Services

Alcohol and Drug Treatment Expert: Dr. Nick Taylor, Taylor Behavioral Health

Criminal Defense Bar: Ty Gee of Haddon, Morgan and Foreman

Mental Health Treatment Provider: Dr. Wayne Maxwell, North Range Behavioral Health, Greeley, Colorado

Colorado Department of Education: Janelle Krueger, Prevention Initiatives

Colorado District Attorneys Council: Bob Watson, District Attorney, 13th JD, Ft. Morgan

County Sheriffs of Colorado: Sheriff Stan Hilkey, Mesa County

Colorado Association of Chiefs of Police: Chief Gary Hamilton, Cripple Creek Police Department

County Commissioner from a Rural County: Janet Rowland, Mesa County

Organization Providing Advocacy and Support to Rural Municipalities: Erin Goff, Colorado Municipal League, Staff Attorney

Licensed Pharmacist: Petra Abram

Colorado Department of Public Safety: Carol Poole, Acting Director, Division of Criminal Justice

Office of Child's Representative: Theresa Spahn, Director, Office of Child's Representative

Colorado Department of Corrections/Adult Parole: Jeaneene Miller, Director, Division of Adult Parole, Community Corrections, and Youth Offender System

State Judicial Department:
Tom Quinn, Director of Probation Services
Judge James Hiatt, 8th Judicial District

Governor's Policy Staff Representative: Justin Winburn

Appendix B

State Methamphetamine Task Force
Data Committee Members

Co Chair: Jose Esquibel, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Prevention Services Division, Interagency Prevention Systems

Co-Chair: Janet Wood, Colorado Department of Human Services, Behavioral Health Services

Jim Adams-Berger, OMNI Institute

Glenn Davis, Colorado Department of Transportation

Bob Dorshimer, The Council

Steven Harris, Colorado Drug Endangered Children

Tamara Hoxworth, Department of Human Services, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division

Kenya Lyons, Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice

Anne Marlow-Geter: Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, HIV/STD

Lori Moriarity, Thornton Police Department, North Metro Drug Task Force

Carmelita Muniz, Colorado Association of Alcohol and Drug Service Providers

Kris Nash, Colorado Judicial Branch, Division of Probation Services

Terry Rousey, Colorado Department of Human Services, Alcohol and Drug Abuse Division

DeAnn Ryberg, Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment, Disease Control and Environmental Epidemiology Division

Sean Stevens, Colorado Peer Assistance Services

Bev Walz, Rocky Mountain High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (RMHIDTA)

Kasey Weber, Colorado Department of Corrections

Meg Williams, Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal Justice

Summer Wright, OMNI Institute