
Northwest Wisconsin
kNOw Meth



Stakeholders' Forum Summary
&
Recommendations

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Table of Contents

Sponsoring Coalitions..... 1

Background 3

Introduction 4

 Stakeholders’ Forum..... 5

Stakeholder Feedback..... 5

 Barriers and Challenges 6

 Community Resources 6

 Access to Treatment 7

 Other 7

Opportunities..... 7

 Community Resources 8

 Prevention..... 9

 Recovery Support..... 9

 Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice Practices 10

 Other 10

Ideas for Positive Impact..... 10

 Community Resources 11

 Prevention..... 11

 Access to Treatment 12

 Recovery Support..... 13

 Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice Practices 13

 Other 13

Recommendations 14

 Community Resources 14

 Prevention..... 15

 Access to Treatment 15

 Recovery Support..... 16

 Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice 17

Conclusion..... 17

Sponsoring Coalitions



BARRON COUNTY
COMMUNITY COALITION
WHERE COMMUNITY & COLLABORATION GROW

www.bc3coalition.org



www.bcaapc.org



new paradigm partners
NETWORKING SMALL COMMUNITIES THROUGH LEARNING

newparadigmpartners.org



polkunited.org



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Marshfield
Clinic



northwoodscoalition.org



ALLIANCE FOR
WISCONSIN YOUTH

Abstract

On Nov. 30th, 2016 a consortium of coalitions from Barron, Burnett, Polk, Rusk and Washburn Counties brought together a group of community stakeholders from five counties and the St. Croix Chippewa Tribe of Wisconsin to discuss methamphetamine abuse in their communities. This document provides a summary of that meeting and recommendations for action. The goal is to use the information from the Stakeholders' Forum to guide regional efforts for combating methamphetamine addiction and related consequences.

Background

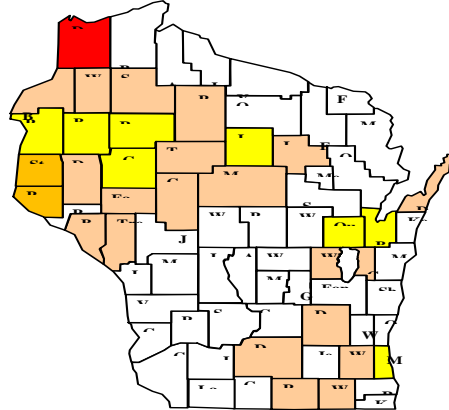
Made from cold tablets, alcohol, lithium from batteries, and ammonia (often stolen from farm fertilizer suppliers), as well as other dangerous ingredients, methamphetamine (meth) is a powerful, illegally-produced stimulant that attacks the central nervous system. Use of meth can quickly lead to nervousness, compulsive behavior, irritability, anger, aggressiveness, hallucinations, paranoia, depression with suicidal tendencies, heart attacks, and strokes. The use of meth has spread throughout the United States, particularly in the West, Midwest, and Southeast. The Northern and Western areas of Wisconsin have been particularly impacted by recent increases in meth use.

The Wisconsin State Patrol reported from 2010 to 2014, the number of meth-related cases rose 136 percent; arrests increased 189 percent; and grams of meth seized jumped 1,592 percent. The Wisconsin State Patrol added the vast majority of meth-related arrests and cases originated in Northwestern Wisconsin along, or very near, the Minnesota border.¹

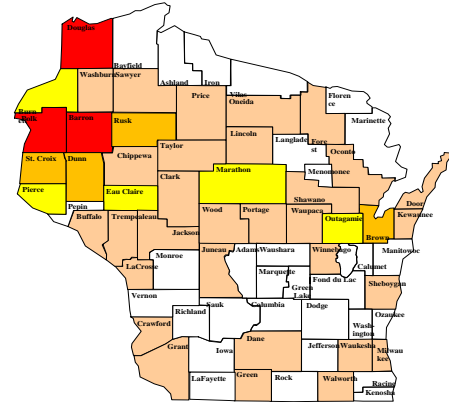
As cited in the *2016 Wisconsin Methamphetamine Study* (Nov. 2016), the Wisconsin Department of Corrections (DOC) reported the number of inmates with simple meth possession charges increased 371 percent from 2011 to 2015. In addition, the number of Division of Community Corrections (DCC) offenders with simple meth possession charges jumped 362 percent during the same period.

Between 2011 and 2015, meth cases analyzed by the State Crime Lab increased 349 percent. In comparison, during the same period, heroin cases rose 97 percent. Additional analysis of State Crime Lab data revealed the number of Wisconsin counties with a higher number of meth cases than heroin cases increased from 24 in 2011 to 31 in 2015.¹

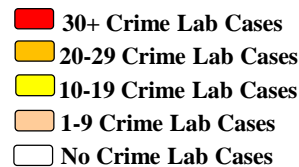
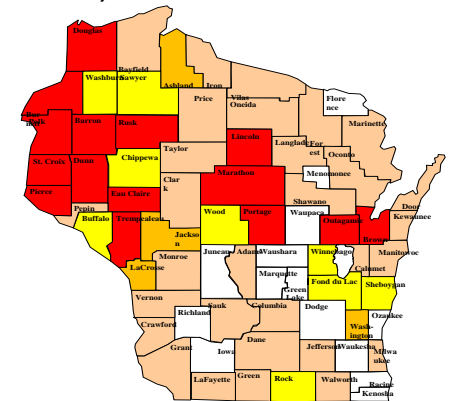
Meth Cases, WI State Crime Lab - 2009



Meth Cases, WI State Crime Lab - 2012



Meth Cases, WI State Crime Lab - 2015



¹ Wisconsin Statewide Intelligence Center, Southeast Wisconsin Threat Analysis Center, and Federal Bureau of Investigation Milwaukee Field Division- Field Intelligence Group. (Nov. 2016). *2016 Wisconsin Methamphetamine Study*

In addition:

- Ninety percent of identity theft cases are generated by drug users, mostly by meth users.
- For each pound of meth produced, five to six pounds of hazardous waste is generated. According to the Drug Enforcement Administration, the average cost to clean up a methamphetamine production laboratory is \$1,900.²
- Meth prices in Wisconsin fall between \$100 and \$200 per gram, but have fallen dramatically in the last few years. A typical “hit” of meth is about one quarter gram and costs between \$25 and \$50.³
- The number of meth-related operating while intoxicated (OWI) and motor vehicle deaths jumped 197% from 2012 to 2015.⁴

As stated in the *2016 Wisconsin Methamphetamine Study*, “The scourge of methamphetamine endangers communities on many levels--families torn apart, futures destroyed, the natural environment polluted, and local governments strapped with the added burden of fighting the meth problem” (FBI, 2016). To address this growing problem, many counties in northwest Wisconsin began prevention initiatives aimed at reducing meth use. This effort was put in place to mitigate the consequences meth addiction has on individuals, families, and communities.

In 2016, a consortium of coalitions in northwestern Wisconsin came together to discuss rising rates of methamphetamine abuse and related consequences. In the spring and summer of 2016, the Northwoods Coalition⁵ convened several meetings of member coalitions to share information, program initiatives, and successes/challenges related to meth prevention and treatment. In the fall of 2016, the region agreed to brand educational messaging related to meth prevention as the *kNOw Meth* campaign.

Introduction

In November 2016, Barron County Community Coalition, Burnett County Prevention Coalition, Polk United Healthier Together, Rusk County Youth Council and Washburn County New Paradigm Partners - Rural CODE Coalition convened a forum of key stakeholders from the five counties to identify areas of opportunity for meth prevention efforts within the region. This document provides a summary of that meeting as well as recommendations for action. The goal for the five counties involved in this effort is to use the information from the Stakeholders’ Forum and resulting recommendations in combination with the efforts of the Northwoods coalition to guide regional efforts for combatting methamphetamine addiction and related consequences.

² Wisconsin Department of Justice. Retrieved from: <https://www.doj.state.wi.us/dci/drugs-wi>

³ Federal Bureau of Investigation; Electronic Communication; January 1, 2016.

⁴ As cited in Wisconsin Statewide Intelligence Center, Southeast Wisconsin Threat Analysis Center, and Federal Bureau of Investigation Milwaukee Field Division- Field Intelligence Group. (Nov. 2016). *2016 Wisconsin Methamphetamine Study*.

⁵ Northwoods Coalition: www.Northwoodscoalition.org

Stakeholders' Forum

“This is not just a public safety or law enforcement problem. It is taxing the resources of law enforcement agencies, jails treatment providers, child protection workers, public health officials, and health care systems.”

- Brad Schimel,
Wisconsin Attorney General

On November 30th, 2016, Barron County Community Coalition, Burnett County Prevention Coalition, Polk United Healthier Together, Rusk County Youth Council and Washburn County New Paradigm Partners -Rural CODE Coalition brought together a group of community stakeholders from five counties and the St. Croix Chippewa Tribe of Wisconsin to discuss methamphetamine abuse in their communities. Those in attendance included representatives from: businesses; civic and volunteer organizations; elected officials, health care; law enforcement; judicial and criminal justice; media; religious/fraternal organizations; schools; state, local, and tribal government; treatment and recovery; local health services, public health and social services; emergency response services; housing; coalition, tribal, and other community members. A total of 137 individuals attended the forum and provided feedback on meth issues facing their communities.

Over the course of the three-hour forum, attendees were asked to join one of 12 break-out groups to discuss barriers and challenges; opportunities; and recommendations for making an impact within their spheres of influence. The break-out groups were: community organizations, employers, faith-based organizations, healthcare, housing, judicial, law enforcement, recovery, education, treatment, youth, and other. The following is a summary of those break-out group discussions.

Stakeholder Feedback

Stakeholders within each of 12 break-out groups were asked to discuss the following three questions related to their community sector:

1. In your sector, what are the barriers or challenges that you face in addressing the meth issue in our region?
2. What opportunities exist within your sector to positively impact the meth issue?
3. What other ideas do you have that could positively impact the meth issue?

Notes from each group discussion were analyzed for themes for each of the above questions. Themes are not mutually exclusive. For example, discussion around needing transportation options to help those in recovery get to meetings fits into both the recovery support and community resources themes. Five overarching themes emerged across the three questions. In addition, several sub-themes or concepts were identified under each of the overarching themes.

Community Resources

- Transportation
- Housing
- Funding
- Education/Communication

Prevention

- Education
- Alternative Activities
- Support within Schools

Access to Treatment

- Availability of Services
- Transportation

Recovery support

- Housing
- Transportation
- Workforce/ Employer Development

Law enforcement/Criminal Justice practices

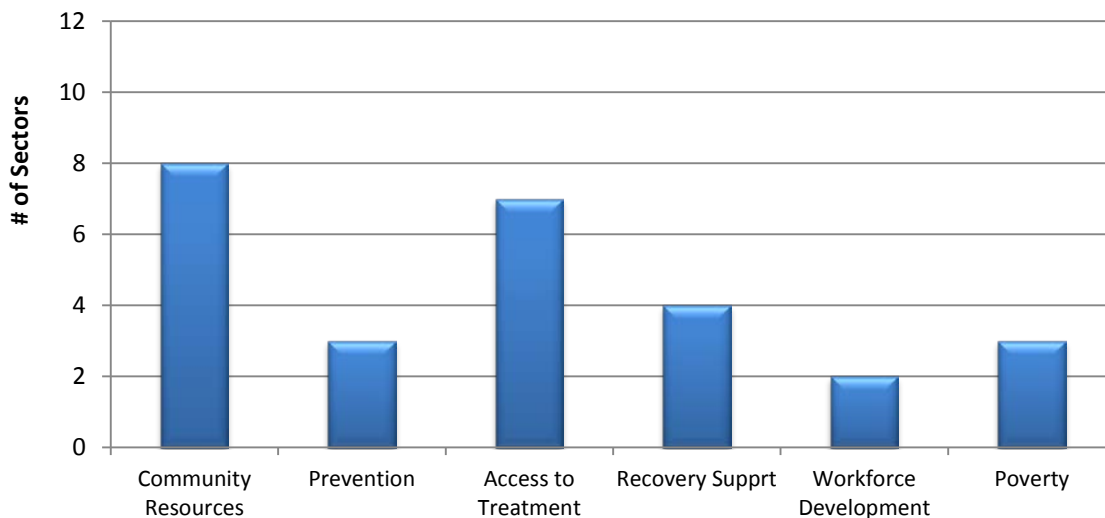
- Diversion
- Workforce Development

Barriers and Challenges

The first discussion question asked participants to identify barriers or challenges for addressing meth issues within their sector. There were two major themes/concepts that emerged from group discussions as barriers/challenges for addressing meth issues within the community.

1. Community Resources
2. Access to Treatment

Figure 1 – Number of Sectors Identifying Concept as a Barrier/Challenge



Community Resources

Discussion around the need for/lack of community resources for addressing meth-related issues came up in eight of 12 break-out group discussions. Two major concepts under the community resources theme were transportation and housing. Five groups identified transportation and three groups identified housing as community resources which present barriers to addressing meth issues at a community level. The need for more funding and better communication across community groups were also identified as needs. Comments related to each concept are listed below:

Transportation

- Getting to meetings is difficult in a rural community
- Explore faith-based organizations capacity to address transportation

- No public transportation

Housing

- Background checks on housing application can be limiting
- No one will rent to felons

Financial/Funding

- Other alcohol and other drug abuse related priorities, i.e. opioids
- Cost of assessments/testing
- Grants to specifically address meth issues
- Poverty

Access to Treatment

Of the 12 break-out groups who discussed barriers and challenges, seven of them discussed access to treatment. Comments included:

- Needed treatment resources do not exist in the community, i.e. detox facility, treatment center, or behavioral health/alcohol and other drug treatment
- No funding for helping people who need treatment
- More caseworkers for individuals and families needed
- 21-28 days of treatment does not solve the problem
- Treatment is not long enough
- Minimal availability for treatment before jail
- Treatment opening delays (i.e. when someone is ready to get help, they cannot get in for treatment)

Other

Other barriers/challenges discussed were related to prevention and recovery support. Some of the identified barriers/challenges within these themes are listed below.

Prevention

- Biases towards those with substance use disorders (stigma)
- Family history of substance abuse
- Same people at the table in a small community
- Youth don't have a voice

Recovery Support

- No way for people to get to Narcotics Anonymous (NA)/Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) meetings
- What do people do when they have burned all their bridges?
- Expand Meals on Wheels
- Need access to supports that are not court ordered

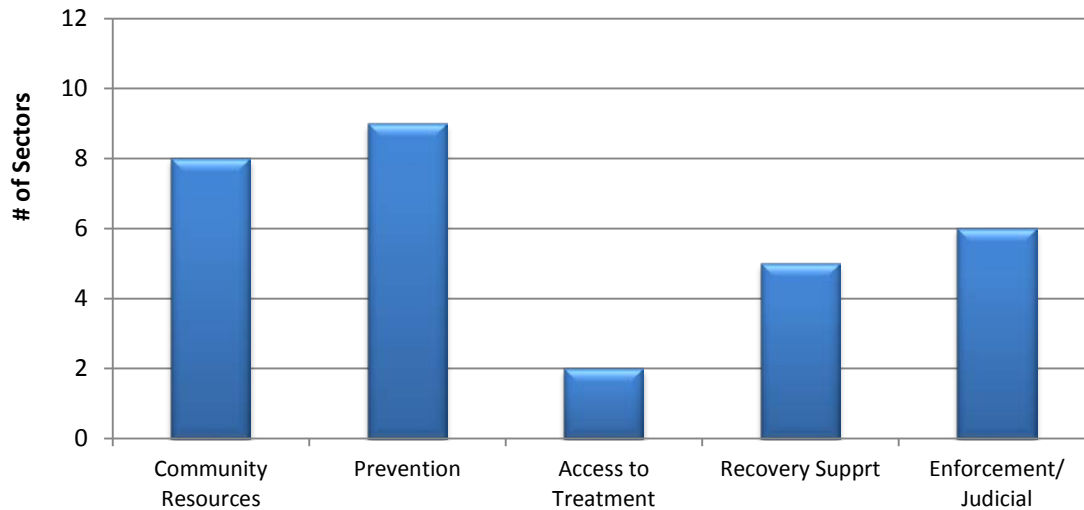
Opportunities

The second discussion question asked participants to identify opportunities within their sector for impacting meth abuse. There were four major themes that emerged from group discussions as opportunities for addressing meth issues within the community (Figure 2).

1. Community Resources
2. Prevention

3. Recovery Support
4. Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice Practices

Figure 2 – Number of Sectors Identifying Concept as an Opportunity



Community Resources

Eight of 12 sectors responding to this question saw opportunities for addressing meth abuse within existing community resources or by adding additional community resources. Note that these themes are not mutually exclusive. For example, opportunities for affordable sober housing falls within the community resources as well as the recovery support themes. Identified community resource opportunities included resource guides, funding, transportation, housing, education, and sober community events. Some of the comments related to these opportunities included:

Transportation

- Transportation within the community to assist with sober living

Housing

- WestCAP- Homeless Prevention
- Rapid Rehousing program with doable security deposit (WestCAP)
- Incorporate Rent SMART (UW System) – class about what it takes to be a good renter, into Drug Court
- Salvation Army – providing housing vouchers
- Faith-based organizations – assist with security deposits

Resources/Funding

- Resource guide within workplaces about meth and resources for help
- Funding for drug tests
- Department of Justice and Wisconsin Trauma project grants
- Information and support programs for friends and families of someone who is using
- Maximize Comprehensive Community Services (CCS)

Education/Communication

- Town hall meetings
- Meth hotline
- Work with young families and provide parental education support
- Red Cedar classes (The Brain MRI)

Other

- Cultural events
- Opportunities for family and adult sober events, gatherings and hobbies
- Community agencies need to work together and communicate
- Make this issue a community priority
- Additional support for service workers

Prevention

The majority (9 of 12 sectors) identified prevention as an opportunity when addressing meth abuse within the community. Concepts under this theme include education, alternative activities, and providing support through school programs.

Education

- Prevention and youth leadership programs at Indianhead Community Action Agency
- Youth council; teaching children they can make positive changes in their community
- Safety talks within the workplace about what to look for (signs of use)
- Substance abuse training for employers, managers and supervisors

Alternative Activities

- Teach yoga/meditation as a way of prevention
- Cultural community events
- Hosting “clean parties”
- Local and/or regional anti-drug event with a focus on anti-drug and leadership

Support within Schools

- Curriculums designed to help students deal with stress
- Too Good for Drugs – 3rd-5th grade program
- Develop uniform standards for school based prevention programming

Other

- Grassroots collaboration
- Identify children who are struggling through needs assessment data

Recovery Support

Recovery support opportunities were identified in five of 12 sectors who discussed this question. Many mentioned support groups such as Narcotics Anonymous (NA) and Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) as community opportunities. Comments included:

- More crystal meth anonymous groups
- NA and AA meetings at all times of the day at various locations
- Nar-Anon/Ala-non for families
- Support people to have fun in a sober way
- Transportation to help with sober living
- Mentors/coaches or mentorship programs

- Support groups
- Jail ministry

Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice Practices

Half of the sectors involved in break-out groups identified law enforcement or criminal justice practices as areas of opportunity within the community when dealing with methamphetamine issues.

- Drug treatment courts
 - Tiered drug court
 - Meth Diversion program (Burnett County)
- Daily reporting to test for alcohol/drugs
- Mandatory soft incarceration – allowing users to have some control over taking back their lives
- Cost efficient ways to remediate sentence, i.e. bond condition, color system
- Drug court tests (i.e. drug tests) tied to employment testing and placement
- Many get introduced to NA/AA in jail, but the foundation for making a life change isn't there. Provide access to NA/AA or other treatment before entering jail so the foundation is there and success is more probable
- Police-assisted addiction and recovery initiative (PAARI)
- Provide support to “Good Samaritans” who brought someone for help
- Jail ministry

Other

Other opportunities discussed were related to access to treatment and workforce development. Some of the identified opportunities within these themes are listed below.

Access to Treatment

- Provide treatment opportunities prior to incarceration, so recovery can continue during incarceration rather than starting there
- Matrix training
- Meth case management
- Contracted outpatient services
- In-house treatment

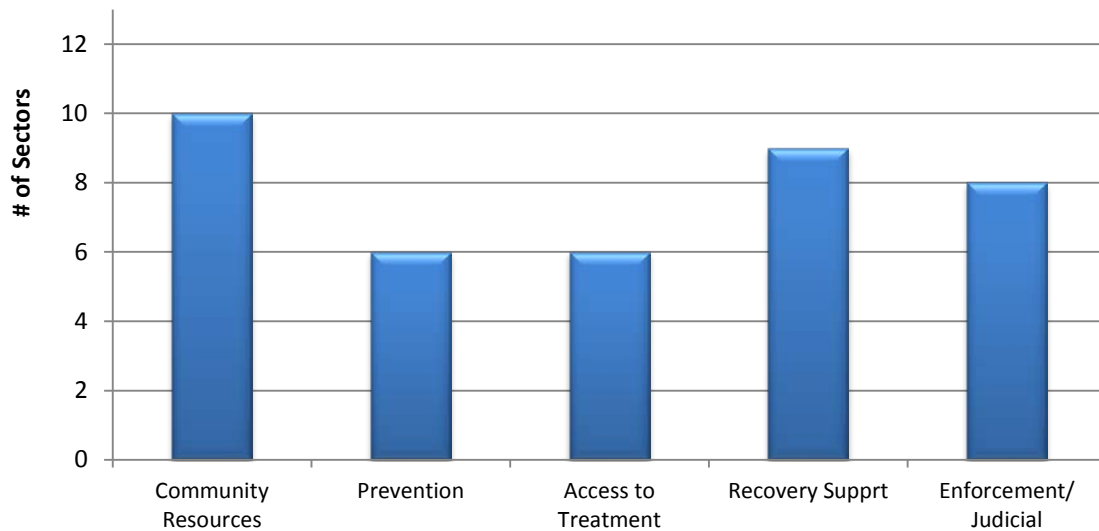
Workforce Development

- Vocational skill training between worksites and schools
- Workforce development training in jails

Ideas for Positive Impact

The final discussion question asked participants to provide ideas for ways to positively impact meth use and related consequences at the community level. This question elicited the most conversation among all 12 break out groups. Dialogue related to this question included discussion within all five themes (community resources, prevention, access to treatment, recovery support, and law enforcement/criminal justice practices). In addition, workforce development and the need for workplace and employer training were identified when discussing this question. The ability to make changes and provide additional services through housing, alternative activities, and youth development also emerged as concepts within these themes.

Figure 3 – Number of Sectors Identifying Concept as an Area for Potential Impact



Community Resources

Ten of the 12 sector break-out groups identified community resources as an area where positive impacts could be made. Potential for improvement and increased services were specifically identified for housing and funding opportunities. In addition, several comments related to providing community resources for recovery and family support such as, establishing Nar-anon groups and providing support systems for families of users were made.

Housing

- Reduce barriers to housing, i.e. background checks
- Sobriety 1st treatment housing
- Seminar for private/public housing related to pros and cons of leasing to people in recovery or drug court
- Landlord-tenant reforms – assist landlords in removing barriers if they rent to people in treatment/recovery
- Grant funding for low income people who are in treatment to help with housing

Financial/Funding

- Expand Coordinated Care Services support services to everyone
- Funding for school social workers to combat the problem sooner
- Finding and writing for grant opportunities that address the problem and include connecting resources within the entire community

Prevention

General prevention services were specifically identified by six community sectors discussing how to impact meth abuse in the community. While a large majority of the prevention-related dialogue was related to providing support to children through the school system, general community education and alternative activities (both within and outside of school systems) were also mentioned related to this topic.

Education

- Youth program that targets alcohol and other drug issues – empowering youth to tackle the problem and find solutions
- Vocational skill training between worksites and schools
- Youth programs
- Provide cultural seminars
- Increase community awareness
- Needle exchange

Alternative Activities

- Provide more drug-free and alcohol-free activities (i.e. ice fishing contests, snowmobiling, meals, bingo, movie nights, and motorcycling)
- Teach children skills to deal with stress (yoga, exercise, and other healthy coping skills)
- Personal fitness instead of study halls

Support within Schools

- Teach about alcohol and other drug issues outside of health classes
- Prevention education in schools (i.e. meth 101, people in recovery doing speaking engagements within the school)
- Student-led assemblies – let the students decide what is important to them
- Use the developmental assets approach
- Mandatory testing for Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) physical
- Mandatory WIAA sponsored Drug Identification Training for Educational Professionals (DITEP) trainings for coaches
- Mandatory DITEP training for youth leaders (i.e. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4H, coaches)
- Education to those engaged in sports

Access to Treatment

Access to treatment is an important issue when dealing with methamphetamine abuse. Many stakeholders identified access to treatment as an important area where improvements for positive impact could be made. Some of the ideas mentioned related to increasing access to treatment included: providing more long-term treatment options; changing reimbursement and credentialing requirements; and funding innovative treatment options. Some of the comments are listed below:

- There is nothing from Eau Claire to Superior – could healthcare facilities come together to establish a centrally located treatment facility?
 - Explore foundation funding to support this concept
- Establish more treatment facilities and case management (is the Salvation Army a possibility?)
- Could unused buildings be converted to treatment and recovery support centers?
- Increase reimbursement rates for providers
- More realistic requirements for being a credentialed substance abuse counselor
- Work with insurance providers to ensure coverage without repercussions
- Treatment services provided at apartment complexes

Recovery Support

Over half of the community sector break-out groups discussed potentials to impact meth abuse by providing more recovery support services. As with discussions about barriers/challenges and opportunities, dialogue around this question specifically mentioned housing opportunities and support groups. Comments included:

- Provide sober living opportunities with continued support to stay clean
- Supervised efficiency housing (similar to a half-way house) for after prison or treatment for at least one year after release with mentorship, education and parenting classes
- Sober living programs and homes
- Establish more Crystal Meth Anonymous groups
- Peer support programs
- EXPO – ex-prisoners organizing in Chippewa Valley (City of Chippewa Falls)
- Mentorship programs
 - Mentorship programs using volunteers from the community
- Walking the Red Road groups
- Need to provide a safe place for people to talk about their recovery and addiction – reduce the stigma

Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice Practices

Law enforcement and criminal justice practice changes (including services prior to or during incarceration) were mentioned within eight of the 12 break-out group discussions. Thoughts related to this theme included:

- More diversion programs
- Provide more access to treatment/sobriety meetings in the jails
- Provide resources and accountability structure that is not court ordered, i.e. prior to receiving charges
- Participation in drug court could assist with housing options
- Explore mandated reporting – a child saying they are struggling is currently not mandated reporting
- Police assisted eviction notices, having an officer present while presenting eviction notice
- Remove/change tort law

Other

Outside of the five main themes identified above, the most commonly mentioned concept was related to providing workforce development training for individuals in treatment or recovery and for employers/potential employers for understanding addiction and recovery. Thoughts included:

- Workforce education
- Daily structured employment classes for inmates so opportunities are available upon release
- Resources for putting inmates into structured rehabilitation for joining the workforce
- Vocational skill training between CEO's and schools
- Employer networking
- Roundtable discussions about addiction services within the workplace

Recommendations

The stakeholders' forum provided the opportunity for community members from multiple sectors across five counties to discuss issues facing their communities related to meth abuse and to begin strategizing potential solutions for mitigating the consequences meth use has on individuals, families, and the community as a whole. While this report provides a summary of those discussions and includes many recommendations for improvement, some strategies are seen as more actionable for communities within the five identified counties. Of note, these are not the only concepts discussed during the stakeholders' forum which, if implemented, would make an impact on meth use and support individuals in achieving long-term recovery. There is much work to be done to combat meth use and related consequences in Northwestern Wisconsin. The following recommendations were pulled from this report to help communities take actionable steps towards supporting the health and well-being of all individuals living in the community.

Community Resources

Community resources are the people and places members of a given community can turn to for assistance in filling needs. Traditional community resources start with organizations that focus on helping people, such as support groups and poverty outreach groups, but the definition of community resources is much broader. It includes public services, such as libraries and post offices; gathering places, such as community centers and churches; and businesses that serve the community by providing jobs and easy access to necessary products.⁶ Individuals who work to improve community life by helping others, cleaning up the community or organizing informal community activities are also community resources. Community resources can be leveraged to promote prevention, access to treatment, recovery support, and law enforcement/criminal justice policies. The following community resources should be explored and expanded to reduce meth use and related consequences:

1. Local resource guides should be developed and provided to community members in a confidential way through employers, schools, and public service organizations.
2. Faith-based organizations should be engaged to identify their capacity to address transportation; assist with security deposits and/or housing vouchers; and offer recovery support groups, such as NA.
3. The regional meth hotline (715-537-METH) should be promoted and advertised.
4. Local municipalities and organizations should provide more drug-free and alcohol-free activities (i.e. ice fishing contests, snowmobiling, meals, bingo, movie nights, and cultural events) in the community.
5. Expand the West CAP service area to include all Northwest Wisconsin communities so that programs such as SSI/SSDI, Outreach, Access and Recovery (SOAR) can be offered for eligible adults who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness and have a mental illness, medical condition, and/or a co-occurring substance use disorder.
6. Establish a Teen Leadership Academy, such as the one offered in Rusk County, to work with youth on developing advocacy skills and action plans as well as identifying how change can happen at the community level.

⁶ University of Kansas. (2016). Community Toolbox. Retrieved from: ctb.ku.edu.

Prevention

Substance abuse prevention entails implementing programs and strategies aimed at preventing the onset of substance use or limiting the development of problems associated with using alcohol and other drugs. Prevention programs work at the community level with civic, religious, law enforcement, and other government organizations to enhance anti-drug norms and pro-social behaviors. Many programs coordinate prevention efforts across settings to communicate consistent messages through school, work, religious institutions, and the media. Research has shown that programs that reach youth through multiple settings can strongly impact community norms. Community-based programs also typically include development of policies or enforcement of regulations, mass media efforts, and community-wide awareness programs.⁷ With this in mind, it is recommended that:

7. Efforts to raise awareness about substance abuse, in particular meth abuse, should continue and be provided through a broad range of messaging tools in the community.
 - Host Town Hall Meetings to educate communities.
 - Provide cultural seminars to promote cultural connectedness and humility.
 - Educate on the science of addiction and ways to reduce stigma.
8. Community norms which reject the acceptability of substance use by youth should be supported and strengthened. As such, drug testing for Wisconsin Interscholastic Athletic Association (WIAA) physicals should be mandatory.
9. Workforce development should be provided in order to support professionals in recognizing substance use in youth.
 - Drug Identification Training for Educational Professionals (DITEP) trainings for coaches should be mandatory and WIAA sponsored.
 - DITEP training should be provided for youth leaders (i.e. Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, 4H, faith-based leaders, elders).
 - DITEP training should be provided for employers, managers, and supervisors.
10. In order to prevent poor health outcomes for the increasing population of individuals using meth intravenously, a needle exchange program should be established.
11. Develop uniform standards for school-based prevention programming.
 - Utilize the Too Good for Drugs evidence-based school curriculum.
12. Explore and promote alternative ways to cope with stressors/triggers.
 - Yoga and Mindfulness
 - Wellness
 - Cultural connectedness

Access to Treatment

Drug addiction is a chronic disease characterized by compulsive, or uncontrollable, drug seeking and use despite harmful consequences and changes in the brain, which can be long lasting. These changes in the brain can lead to the harmful behaviors seen in people who use drugs. Drug addiction is also a relapsing disease. Relapse is the return to drug use after an attempt to stop. Because addiction is a chronic disease, people can't simply stop using drugs for a few days and be cured. Most patients need long-term or repeated care to stop using completely and recover their lives.⁸ Having access to responsive treatment services throughout the recovery process is integral to supporting individuals in achieving

⁷ National Institute on Drug Abuse. Preventing Drug Use among Children and Adolescents. Retrieved from: www.drugabuse.gov.

⁸ National Institute on Drug Abuse. Retrieved from: <https://www.drugabuse.gov/publications/drugfacts/treatment-approaches-drug-addiction>.

long-term recovery. Based on this reality, it is recommended that treatment services be expanded and innovative programs for providing treatment should be explored.

13. In order to reduce barriers to accessing treatment, services should be expanded to more locations (such as apartment complexes) throughout the region and within local communities.
14. Support the implementation of innovative programs, such as the St. Croix Tribal “First Day Out” program, and Red Cedar’s Restart Program (Barron County). These programs are for individuals released from jail/prison to prepare them for how to remain sober while living back in the community and provide resources for accessing treatment.
15. Advocate for funding for regional treatment facilities.
16. Promote the Matrix Treatment Model with local providers and provide training and system development in order to implement the model either within a community or as a collaborative regional effort.

Recovery Support

The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) describes recovery as “a process of change through which individuals improve their health and wellness, live a self-directed life, and strive to reach their full potential.” In an accompanying list of guiding principles, it notes that abstinence remains the safest approach for those with substance use disorders, but emphasizes that “recovery occurs via many pathways.”⁹ For this to happen, individuals need communities which support their recovery, reduce barriers to maintaining sobriety, and promote recovery oriented systems of care. The following items should be addressed to support recovery in Northwestern Wisconsin:

17. Funding options for providing transportation to individuals for accessing recovery support services, such as NA meetings, should be explored.
18. Education tools and talking points should be developed and provided to landlords in order reduce housing barriers for people in treatment/recovery who may have no or poor renting histories.
19. Education tools and talking points should be developed and provided to employers in order reduce the stigma and barriers for people in treatment/recovery who may have no or little history of employment.
20. Expand Meals on Wheels program to serve multiple populations.
21. Work to establish Crystal Meth Anonymous, Narcotics Anonymous, Alcoholics Anonymous, Nar-Anon, and Ala-non programs in the community.
22. Utilize culturally appropriate treatment pathways that include culturally responsive services such as the Red Road to Wellbriety.

“For most of the guys I work with, they grew up in a home where drug use and alcohol abuse was a normal way of life. For them this isn’t recovery, because recovery means you are getting back something you had; most never had that life of sobriety. This is more of a discovery for them. They are discovering a new way of living without the drugs and alcohol.”

- Mark Stoner, St. Croix
Chippewa Tribe of Wisconsin

⁹ Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration. (Dec. 2011). Retrieved from: <https://www.samhsa.gov/newsroom/press-announcements/201112220800>.

Law Enforcement/Criminal Justice

Policies related to the War on Drugs have caused the number of people arrested, convicted, and incarcerated for drug-related crime to increase drastically. In 1980 there were 40,900 people incarcerated for drug offenses; by 2013, this number increased to 489,000. Considering that the vast majority of drug arrests are for possession, the criminal justice system is left to address high levels of substance abuse and addiction. Approximately half of prison and jail inmates meet DSM-IV criteria for substance abuse or dependence, and significant percentages of state and federal prisoners committed the act they are incarcerated for while under the influence of drugs.¹⁰ Given the high incidence of drug-related offenses among individuals who have substance use disorders, strategies for supporting recovery throughout the criminal justice system need to be implemented.

23. A resource and accountability structure for low-level drug offenses should be established that is not court ordered, i.e. prior to receiving charges - such as the police assisted addiction and recovery initiative (PAARI) and the Gloucester, MA 'Angel' program.
24. In order to improve employment options for individuals leaving the correction system, daily, structured employment classes should be provided within jails/prisons.
25. Drug Courts should incorporate Rent SMART (UW System, <http://fyi.uwex.edu/house/rent-smart/>) classes for participants providing practical education to help potential renters to both acquire and keep decent housing.
26. Resources for accessing treatment and support groups should be offered at or near the time of arrest and/or booking.
27. Establish Meth Diversion programs for lower level offenders such as the one offered in Burnett County.

Conclusion

Northwestern Wisconsin is experiencing an influx of methamphetamine abuse that is affecting the health and well-being of the region. Through a series of Northwoods Coalition meetings and the Stakeholders' Forum, Northwestern Wisconsin is gearing up to make positive changes within the community that will improve community resources, prevention services, access to treatment, recovery support, and law enforcement/criminal justice practices. Analysis from the kNOw Meth Stakeholders' Forum, held in November 2016, showed consensus across community stakeholders on these topic areas.

While there are barriers and challenges to addressing meth use in the region, stakeholders clearly identified several areas of opportunity and improvement. For the most part, needs identified within the region fell into a "four pillar" approach to combating meth abuse by sector and throughout communities; prevention, access to treatment, recovery support, and law enforcement/criminal justice practices. However, based on stakeholder feedback a fifth pillar - community resources – also emerged.

The goal within the coordinating organizations of the Stakeholders' Forum is two-fold. First, take the information and actionable recommendations learned from this report as well as lessons learned from local and regional initiatives to guide meth task force work and local community efforts. Second, to educate and create awareness about the size and scope of the methamphetamine epidemic in Northwestern Wisconsin.

¹⁰ The Center for Prison Health and Human Rights. Retrieved from <http://www.prisonerhealth.org/educational-resources/factsheets-2/incarceration-substance-abuse-and-addiction/>.

Many opportunities and creative solutions to this problem exist. By recognizing and highlighting substance abuse issues impacting our communities, Northwestern Wisconsin aims to shed light on the problem of meth abuse, the impact it is having in communities, and the resources which could be leveraged to mitigate the consequences of abuse. By identifying problems and potential solutions, supporters of the kNOw Meth initiative are making every effort to ensure that Northwestern Wisconsin is a safe and healthy place to live.

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meth**

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