



For Immediate Release

Date: March 27, 2017

To: Barron County Media Outlets

From: Sarah Turner, [sarah.turner@co.barron.wi.us](mailto:sarah.turner@co.barron.wi.us), (715) 537-6115

### **Meth One Year Later**

March 30th marks one year since the first Methamphetamine (Meth) Town Hall Meeting in Barron County. This meeting was the first of seven educational sessions to take place in response to the alarming resurgence of meth in the county. Efforts persist as government and community groups work together to prevent meth use and support people in recovery.

Since the first town hall meeting, local and regional initiatives have focused on raising awareness and educating the community on the dangers and impacts of meth. Government agencies, volunteer groups, religious organizations, area businesses, and community members alike have come together to learn and discuss problems and solutions. Projects have included: town hall meetings, regional stakeholders meeting, press releases, "Hiding in Plain Sight" mock room presentations, kNOw Meth Barron County Facebook page, and 537-METH tipline.

"Over the past year we have worked to inform the public about the problems meth has created for Barron County and the surrounding area. Our efforts are far from over as meth continues to pose a threat to our community," said Sheriff Chris Fitzgerald. "Our next step will be moving from education to action. We have new plans in the works locally and regionally to combat this drug. We are excited to see these plans come to life in the coming year."

In November 2016, local, regional and state leaders came together at the Regional Stakeholder's Meeting to discuss how meth impacts different sectors of our community and identify solutions. A report was created based on the conversations had at this meeting. This regional report will be released in April. It will be used to guide the work of the local and regional meth task forces.

"In talking with community members and people in recovery, we have identified the lack of treatment options in our area as a barrier to building a meth-free community. We are working with local, regional, and state partners to find a solution," states Barron County Human Services Director, Stacey Frolik. "We also understand the importance of early intervention to prevent drug use. We are looking at ways to increase preventative efforts and intervene sooner to help build resiliency in people who may be at risk for developing a drug addiction".

The meth problem is not isolated to Barron County or our region, as a recent statewide report from the Wisconsin Department of Justice and FBI found. Meth use has been growing throughout the Wisconsin, primarily in rural areas and in the western part of the state. In response, leaders from all over Wisconsin are coming together for the Northwoods Coalition Meth Summit. This event will take place on April 3rd at the Heartwood Resort in Trego. Multidisciplinary presentations will address challenges, lessons learned, and best practices for building meth-free communities. The Summit will conclude with a discussion to identify specific action steps to prevent meth use, encourage and support recovery, and build resilient, meth-free communities. For more information visit [www.northwoodscoalition.org](http://www.northwoodscoalition.org) or find kNOw Meth Barron County on Facebook.

###