

**Navajo County Coalition Against Drug Abuse  
2007 Overview**



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**SCABS, HALLUCINATIONS,  
THEN THINGS REALLY  
GO DOWNHILL.**

**METH**  
NOT EVEN ONCE.

THE METH PROJECT

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# History & Summary of Activities

## Navajo County Coalition Against Drug Abuse

### INTRODUCTION

Since September 2006, the Navajo County Coalition has reached almost 10,000 county residents—face to face—through various community outreach and educational presentations. Between January and the end of July 2007, 39,475 pieces of literature, 700 Not Even Once wristbands & 6,000 anti-meth buttons were distributed to county residents. The Coalition has achieved nearly 26,100 column inches of media coverage in first eight months of 2007, a value of more than \$25,00. Additionally, free PSAs running on major county radio stations, cable television and 13 theater screens, is valued at more than \$15,000.

During its three years of operation under various guises, the Coalition has witnessed a shift in community understanding that drugs, particularly methamphetamines, are a problem in our communities. Despite limited state-grant funding, and the threat of no future state funding for 2008, the Coalition remains confident that growing community-based support will further the Coalition's programs for the future.

#### Data Sources:

A Comprehension Community Assessment was conducted in the spring of 2004. Baseline data, from 154 representatives of emergency and law enforcement first responders and community members identified education as a priority. The 2006 Arizona Youth Survey ranked drug use of among 8th, 10th, and 12th graders in Navajo County as highest in state. More than 3,000 feedback surveys from community Town Halls and other Coalition-conducted public awareness programs are used to guide Coalition direction. Other disaggregated data are largely unavailable.

#### Community Problem Indicators:

Methamphetamine contributes significantly to social issues within the community. According to local sources:

- 44% of the county's population is under age 24, within the Coalition's 12-24 targeted age range <sup>1</sup>
- 65% of child abuse and neglect cases involve meth<sup>2</sup>
- 53% of dependency cases are meth related<sup>3</sup>
- Of 89 children in dependency most under age 5. <sup>4</sup>
- 80% clients in social health services are there for meth-related reasons <sup>5</sup>
- Of newborns testing positive for substance exposure (8 in 2006) 62% were meth exposed <sup>6</sup>
- One out of three DUI in 2006 were meth related; three meth related car accidents in 2006 <sup>7</sup>
- Property theft and identity theft cases are frequently linked to meth addiction<sup>8</sup>
- Monetary loss due to check theft in home burglaries consumes extensive law enforcement time.<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Navajo County website, [www.co.navajo.az.us](http://www.co.navajo.az.us)

<sup>2</sup> Navajo County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA)

<sup>3</sup> CASA

<sup>4</sup> CASA

<sup>5</sup> Navapache Regional Medical Center (NRMC)

<sup>6</sup> NRMC

<sup>7</sup> Navajo County Sheriff's Office

<sup>8</sup> Navajo County police departments

<sup>9</sup> Pinetop-Lakeside Police Department

- 90% Navajo County Jail inmates have meth related crimes <sup>10</sup>
- 62% of DUI Task Force arrests are meth related<sup>11</sup>
- Meth is the #1 drug problem in Navajo County<sup>12</sup>
- 85% of probation department cases are meth related
- 40 juveniles on probation are meth related cases <sup>13</sup>
- 53% of Superior Court cases are direct drug charges<sup>14</sup>
- Among Arizona counties, Navajo ranks highest for meth use among 12<sup>th</sup> graders, and second highest in meth use among 8<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> graders. <sup>15</sup>
- 75% of self-reporting students surveyed report use of any type of drug; 45% report actual meth use.<sup>16</sup>

### **Economic & Social Impact:**

Local businesses report difficulty hiring and maintaining young adults on their workforces due to their inability to pass drug tests.<sup>17</sup> Businesses such as Navopache Electric Co-op and construction sites report copper theft, widely cited to be a result of meth addicts. Increased meth-related crimes have increased local home insurance rates.<sup>18</sup> It costs \$65/day to house one inmate in Navajo County Jail. As 90% of inmates are there for meth-related crimes, this costs the community more than **\$9 million/year**.<sup>19</sup>

Substances used in the community include methamphetamine, marijuana, cocaine and heroin. Alcohol is the drug of choice. <sup>20</sup> Data indicates 25-year-olds and older are heavy users of meth; however, the negative impact on the younger members of the community has drawn our attention.<sup>21</sup> While adult use is in their homes, younger individuals use in seclusion, and in isolated areas in the community. <sup>22</sup> Local contributing conditions include ready availability, relative low cost and high risk behavior. Adolescents' reasons for use include: poverty, boredom and inadequate recreation areas. One student stated, "to ease the pain"

The local cultural attitude has been that the meth issue is "not that serious".<sup>23</sup> Two meth homes (labs) were neutralized during the last two months of 2006. Use and manufacture is easily hidden in the vast, isolated surroundings of the county. Inconsistent legal consequences create a challenge to experiment, as jurisdictions include county, town, state, tribal and federal. Crossing boundaries without jurisdictions following the crossing creates an enforcement vacuum. However, the community continues to look to law enforcement to "solve the problem" of drugs in the community. Additionally, the volume of meth transported through this county en route to Interstate 40 and Interstate 17 impacts access.

At this time, the Coalition is funded only from state grants (\$20,000 in 2006, \$30,000 in 2007). Other funding sources are being pursued, including a non-profit auxiliary to conduct fund-raising—Friends of the Coalition. Outside the reservations, where federal facilities are available, the community has very limited resources and facilities to address drug-related issues. The singular Community Counseling Center accepts clients qualified through the Arizona Department of Economic Security

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<sup>10</sup> Navajo County Sheriff's Office

<sup>11</sup> Navajo County records

<sup>12</sup> Navajo County Sheriff's Office Major Crime Apprehension Team

<sup>13</sup> Navajo County Probation Office

<sup>14</sup> CASA

<sup>15</sup> Arizona Youth Survey 2006, Arizona Criminal Justice Commission

<sup>16</sup> Navajo County Public Fiduciary

<sup>17</sup> Anecdotal information from Walmart, Safeway, Home Depot

<sup>18</sup> Local State Farm Insurance agent

<sup>19</sup> Navajo County Sheriff's Office

<sup>20</sup> Arizona Attorney General's office, Navajo County Data

<sup>21</sup> White Mountain Community Coalition Survey, 2004

<sup>22</sup> Arizona Youth Survey

<sup>23</sup> Coalition Town Hall Surveys, 2006-7

(DES). A retired addictionologist works under the community-counseling umbrella and cooperates with the Coalition. County and town law enforcement officials cooperate and participate with the Coalition in community education/awareness programs. Nearly 200 community residents are registered Coalition members, including representatives from the faith-based community, law enforcement, media, clinicians, agency representatives, etc. The County School Superintendent supports the Coalition and is on the Steering Committee. Three unified school districts and some charter schools work with the Coalition on student education programs. Yet, per capita spending for prevention and treatment in the county is about \$3.26/person.<sup>24</sup>

A further limitation to local services is the lack of even one single residential treatment facility in the county (outside the reservations). The nearest services are in Coconino and Yavapai counties, at least 1 1/2 hour drive.

A county adult drug court was established in 2006, offering monitoring assistance. Of active cases, four are in the 18-25-year-old range. The program has graduated four participants<sup>25</sup> and maintains 98%<sup>26</sup> clean drug test record.

### **CAPACITY**

The White Mountain Coalition Against Meth began with the volunteer organization representing agencies facing consequences of meth use/abuse in 2004. Representatives attended Coalition meetings to initiate planning. The name was changed to Navajo County Community Coalition Against Meth in 2006 to comply with requirements for state grant funding. Working toward sustainability and additional federal grant funding, the Coalition name again changed in 2007 to incorporate a full spectrum of substances.

The Coalition was initiated by community volunteers and maintains directorship by a volunteer steering committee comprised of 12 community leaders, chaired by Navajo County Superior Court Presiding Judge Dale Nielson. In January 2007, the Coalition hired a paid coordinator to administer the organization's activities. Through local activities and meetings, a roster of 250 community stakeholders have volunteered for the Coalition, including medical and behavioral health services personnel, educators, media, drug court representatives, probation officers, court agencies, faith-based organizations, law enforcement, county attorney, etc. Also involved are parents, school district administrators, business people, child-based agencies, treatment professionals and youth serving organizations.

The Steering Committee has mentored volunteers to sustain and deliver the community awareness programs. The goal is to develop "mini" Coalitions in each population center to address the specific needs in each community. Cultural, social and educational needs vary in the six major communities of the county.

Education and curriculum development is directed by qualified educators and supported by school districts. Teacher learning communities will additionally sustain local Coalition units. Local ownership maintains cultural awareness.

Although Navajo, Hopi and Apache tribal Coalitions have their own state funding for anti-meth Coalitions, our Coalition has been instrumental in assisting with start-up of Coalitions in the Navajo Nation and Apache tribe. We cooperate with all three tribes in offering awareness presentations, sharing materials and supporting community education events. Interagency agreements with the three tribal units provide a foundational focus on competence. Indian Health Services guides sensitivity to Native beliefs.

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<sup>24</sup> NRMC

<sup>25</sup> Navajo County Superior Court Presiding Judge Dale Nielson

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*

## **PLANNING**

The Coalition used Town Hall formats for six initial community awareness presentations (2006-7). At those events, participants were surveyed about their level of drug awareness and perception of the community and its needs. Local data, gathered by these Coalition surveys, evidenced: that the meth problem is viewed as extremely widespread.<sup>27</sup> Regarding education programs: 77.5% were not aware of or unsure of their presence in the community. Services identified as “needed” were education/prevention programs (100%), prevention aimed at children (100%) and community education (97%). High involvement groups were identified as young adults (89%); adults (61%) and adolescents/teenagers (13-18%).

With education identified as the number one target, the Coalition proceeded to implement “not even once” programs in local schools, targeting grades 6 to 12. In the first seven months of 2007, the Coalition presented to 3,303 students “not even once” awareness information, educational materials and interactive panels comprised of sociologists, convicted felons and inmates, recovering meth addicts and family members. More than a dozen students went directly from programs and into counseling or advisement.

In July, a two-week leadership program was conducted for 13 at risk students in the Blue Ridge Unified School District. This pilot Junior Leadership Academy was unique collaboration among agencies, educators, at risk students, potential leaders and community members. Locally designed and implemented by professional educators the program was supported through funding and in kind services by the Navajo County School Superintendent, Blue Ridge Unified School District (BRUSD), Navajo County Juvenile Probation, Navajo County Anti-Drug Coalition, Navajo County Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA), Pinetop-Lakeside Police Department, Cellular One and private donations.

The academy focused on personalized instruction, active student involvement and experiences to develop goal setting skills, social and life skills, community service, oral and written communication, academic skill development, decision making/challenge exercises and drug awareness. Principle developers of the JLA were invited to present in two sessions at a national education conference in September. Thus far, at least two school districts in Texas and Arizona expressed interest in implementing a similar program.

On September 5, the coalition gathered 125 community leaders from across the region (Navajo and Apache counties) for the Northeastern Arizona Summit Against Drug Abuse. This day-long conference identified issues in individual communities and brainstormed solutions. The outcome was that individual communities return home with a list of solutions to implement as “mini-coalitions” in their areas. By October, Apache County had set a second Summit for their communities and Heber-Overgaard schools had conducted anti-drug education programs for 170 students.

## **IMPLEMENTATION**

“Not even once” programs for school children in at least four more school districts and one charter school continue this coming school year. Teacher-in service programs remain to be presented to three school districts. Meanwhile, the Education Committee is developing drug awareness curriculum that meet Arizona state standards, for approval by the County School Superintendent. The committee will implement at in schools countywide, including the reservations. Follow-up parent awareness programs will be conducted at schools where student programs have been held (teacher in-service, student “not even once” presentation, parent awareness event being the chronology of awareness presentations). Awareness, visibility and availability of accurate information are a critical chain.

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<sup>27</sup> 68% of respondents saw meth as a widespread problem; 73% viewed it as a very serious problem; meth was ranked most negatively affecting the community (81%) among six drugs listed.

Corporations that are having difficulty maintaining drug-free employees are another target for Coalition awareness programs for employees and management. Such corporations include Home Depot, Farmer John Farms, Abitibi Mills, Walmart, Safeway, Ace Hardware, etc. The Coalition recently joined area chambers of commerce to further business connections.

Other community outreach programs continue on an as-needed basis. For example, cooperation with the Navajo Nation included presentations for a February conference for more than 500 participants; Apache tribe presentations in four locations were accomplished in the first five months of 2007; June 20th presentations are scheduled for the Hopi population and Navajo Nation Meth & Gang Conference. Two media luncheons in March helped build understanding and cooperation with county media, yielding a significant boost in coverage. Programs and displays for groups such as a school Safety Rodeo for children, an Elder Abuse Conference and Chamber of Commerce business programs helps the Coalition extend awareness and information to diverse groups. Opportunities for further exposure have come through participation in Chamber of Commerce Business Matters program televised on cable television, radio interviews, talk shows and live remotes, conducted by the Coalition coordinator.

### **EVALUATION**

Data is collected from each presentation by means of a survey that is customized to that audience and data needs at the time. Through this information, compared to the 2004 baseline community survey and future data collection, the Coalition will have a basis for comparison to determine areas of growth in awareness and those that remain in need.

Over the course of the Coalition's existence, we already have witnessed a willingness and acceptance of information delivery. In 2004, some school districts did not want programs directed at their students, due to lack of recognition of a drug problem. Today, schools directly contact the Coalition for program presentations. Extensive media coverage of drug-related issues and Coalition activities in general has boosted community awareness.

Feedback from Town Hall and school presentations indicated that 95-97% of participants had their questions answered during the Coalition presentations

Largely, the short-term goals of awareness, education and community buy-in are being addressed. The levels of achievement vary by community. Percentages of reduced abuse rates will not be known until future Arizona Youth Survey data is available. High school drug free proms and graduations programs, supported by Community Action Board funds donated to the School Superintendent and Coalition, further demonstrate support. A year-end plans a program for a drug and alcohol-free New Year's eve community event.

### **SUMMARY**

Given the financial and personnel restrictions, the Coalition has excelled in addressing the short term objectives of education and community awareness and has structures in place to maintain and continue that progress.