

# **ASHTABULA COUNTY METHAMPHETAMINE COMMUNITY AWARENESS PLAN**

**Ashtabula County Commissioners**

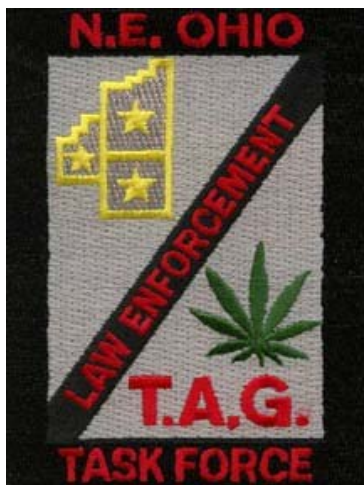
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**JANUARY 2004**

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## Ashtabula County Methamphetamine Response Plan

### Introduction

In the 1980's Ohio communities had to respond to a new drug referred to as "Crack". This drug spread faster than law enforcement could address as it attacked major cities throughout Ohio, and then from small towns to rural areas. During this same time Methamphetamine was rising to prominence in the western United States and law enforcement was warned that the day would come when it would replace Crack as the drug of choice.

How did we respond in Ohio at that time? Law Enforcement watched as the drug crossed the country impacting other states and we discussed safety concerns as they related to finding mobile methamphetamine labs. We talked among ourselves and other agencies about what we should do so it doesn't become our problem and we notified those officials who could have developed a plan for the future.

**What was actually accomplished?** Nothing until Ohio held its Methamphetamine Summit in July 2003. The State of Ohio is behind in developing a response plan to address the problem. Governor Taft sponsored the methamphetamine summit and the results of that summit, any legislation, funding for treatment, or a lead state agency to coordinate responses have not been forthcoming.

Why should Ashtabula County develop a collaborative response plan to the methamphetamine problem? This drug is now "our nightmare", an epidemic that is spreading as fast as a virus and we can not afford to wait on the federal or state government to take a lead role and provide guidance.

To avoid an all out crisis situation, Ashtabula County must create a plan with groups and agencies that have a significant role, interest and concern in addressing Methamphetamine, including education, treatment, prevention, enforcement, justice, farming, environmental, retail and the media.

Because of this the TAG Law Enforcement Task Force with the support of the Trumbull, Ashtabula and Geauga County Sheriff's Office and various agencies throughout Ashtabula County have come together to create a strategy for response.

The following information describes the problem, recommendations to address the problem, current steps that law enforcement is taking to solve the problem and emergency guidelines for response.

## History of Methamphetamine

Amphetamine was discovered by the Germans in 1887 inside a chemistry lab. Amphetamine is considered to be a form of adrenaline, a hormone that provides energy. In the 1930's, amphetamine was marketed as "Benzedrine" an over-the-counter inhaler to treat colds. During the Depression and Prohibition era the drug was used as a means of getting "high".

Methamphetamine, more potent and easy to make, was actually discovered in Japan in 1919. At that time the crystal powder was water soluble, making it easy for injection. During World War II, amphetamines were widely used to keep the fighting man going. In Japan, injectable methamphetamine reached epidemic proportions immediately following World War II, when supplies stored for the military became available to the public.

In the United States during the 1950's legally manufactured methamphetamine became available for use to college students, truck drivers and athletes. As the use of this drug spread, so did its abuse. Amphetamines became the solution for treating weight control and depression.

The 1970 Controlled Substance Act severely restricted the legal production of injectable methamphetamine. Methamphetamine abuse and trafficking have been on the rise since the 1980's, as indicated by investigations, seizures, price, purity and abuse data.

The manufacturing of methamphetamine can be accomplished in several manners but it is most commonly produced using the ephedrine/pseudoephedrine reduction method. Large scale production of methamphetamine depends on accessibility to bulk quantities ephedrine/pseudoephedrine. Because of government restrictions on the sale of ephedrine and international attention paid to use of ephedrine in methamphetamine production meth producers are relying on over-the-counter pseudoephedrine.

Domestically, large scale production of methamphetamine was centered in California for many years. In addition, it was produced in Mexico and smuggled into the United States by Mexican drug traffickers. These large scale labs were protected by well armed men, booby traps and scanning devices for security purposes. Also the chemicals used have resulted in explosions, fires, toxic fumes, medical problems and environmental hazards.

Traditionally, meth traffickers throughout the United States have been motorcycle gangs and homegrown traffickers. At one time organized trafficking had control of the meth market but in recent years that has changed. Current trends suggest that meth trafficking is primarily a local problem.

Meth is here but as history will show the first production and sale of the drug started in the southwestern United States. It was first controlled by outlaw biker gangs and later by Mexican based drug traffickers. As it grew in California and a distribution network was established the drug began to migrate across the United States.

### **Definition of Methamphetamine**

Meth is a highly toxic, strong central nervous system stimulant. As it is easy to make this drug it is widely produced in laboratories with inexpensive and readily available, over the counter ingredients. This drug can be smoked, injected or taken orally. The drug takes different forms depending on how it is used but it is typically white, odorless and bitter tasting. The powder is easy dissolved in water. Its color may change in appearance depending on which chemicals are used. Potential users unaware of the addiction describe their first “use” as a super high that makes you feel like a super person.

Use of methamphetamine will increase heart rate, blood pressure, body temperature, rate of breathing and frequently causes violent behavior. Meth user signs include dilated pupils, hyperactivity, flushed skin, sweating, euphoria, an increased sense of energy, uncontrollable twitching and tremors and insomnia. Those that use the drug on a normal basis have seen increased nervousness, irritability and paranoia. Drug withdrawals produce moderate to severe depression, fatigue, irritability, and anxiety. Those chronic abusers produce psychosis similar to schizophrenia and are characterized by paranoia, skin picking, self-absorption, and auditory and visual hallucinations. Many users have sores on their arms and legs and teeth that are yellow and splintered. Long term affects caused by the use of methamphetamine include central nervous system damage, liver and kidney damage and burning to skin, eyes, nose and throat. In addition chemicals that are released into the air are known to cause cancer.

Chronic abusers are also violent and have erratic behavior. The most dangerous of them is the “tweakers”, those that binge on the drug for three to fifteen days without sleep. The tweaker craves for methamphetamine but the continual use of the drug no longer produces euphoria and the user becomes irritable and paranoid. Chronic paranoid abusers will have flood lights, motion detectors, alarms, fences, guard dogs and booby traps for protection from law enforcement and others. Clandestine laboratories producing small amounts of meth have been spreading across the United States for years. Technology has assisted to increase the production of meth as recipes are now available on the Internet and through word of mouth and the ease of obtaining chemicals has produced more meth producers. Local meth cooks are in business to feed their own or a friend’s habit and to sell a few ounces to keep money coming in.

The average meth addict is white, in their younger thirties and can be male or female. Many hold regular jobs but generally they are poor and lured by the low price and long high.

Remember the commercial shown on television for years “This is your brain on drugs”. Chemicals such as drain cleaner, gasoline, anhydrous ammonia, Red Devil lye, red phosphorous, toluene, sulfuric acid, hydrochloric acid and xylene are all found in street manufactured methamphetamine. Law Enforcement will call these small production operations “Beavis and Butt-head” or “Mom and Pop” labs not because the producers are humorous but because these meth cooks are stupid, dangerous and generally community residents. At one time physicians believed that over time with abstinence that an addict’s brain would clear from methamphetamine use. However, it now appears that damage is permanent as cerebral scans clearly show loss of brain functions.

### **Crack vs. Methamphetamine**

The differences between Methamphetamine and Crack Cocaine are that Crack’s only secondary hazard is the affects it has on the user. Referred to as the “poor man’s cocaine” methamphetamine manufacturers and users are violent in nature and the chemicals used in manufacturing are hazardous. Methamphetamine is known as a “homegrown drug” because it is most often produced with inexpensive over-the-counter ingredients and sold locally. Just the presence alone of Methamphetamine has overwhelmed drug enforcement efforts by reducing investigations on other drugs of abuse, requiring additional specialized training, and increasing the hazards to law enforcement. Consider crimes that are committed by methamphetamine and other drug users to obtain precursor chemicals, fund their addiction, or as part of their drug induced intoxication.

Methamphetamine is highly addictive, causes serious health problems and increases in violent crimes. The drug will cause its user to increase physical activity and they will do so for days without sleep. Meth users are extremely paranoid individuals and are prone to violent behavior. These individuals represent a new threat to law enforcement as a methamphetamine user requires increased safety and security during any confrontation.

Meth is commonly known as “speed” and in the smoked form as “ice”, “crystal” or “crank”. The drug is a white, odorless powder that’s effects sometimes last from 6 to 8 hours. The stimulant effects from methamphetamine can last for hours, instead of minutes as with crack cocaine. Like cocaine, methamphetamine is a Schedule II stimulant, as determined by the Controlled Substance Act, which means that it has a high potential for abuse and addiction.

Because meth comes in different forms it can be smoked, snorted, taken orally or injected and each method differs in how they alter the mood of the individual. Users generally experience an immediate high with snorting offering the quickest effects of all within 3 to 5 minutes. Meth is used similar to crack in a “binge and crash” pattern. This describes how the addict will continue to use the drug to keep the high effect until they ultimately crash.

## **Manufacturing of Methamphetamine and Environmental Risks**

A precursor used in the production of Methamphetamine is anhydrous ammonia. Anhydrous Ammonia is a colorless, pungent gas used as a fertilizer in agricultural areas and as a refrigerant in commercial cooling systems. It is also the least expensive product for our farming community that is struggling. The word “anhydrous” means “without water”. This fertilizer or precursor for methamphetamine production can cause dehydration, cell destruction, chemical burns and in extreme cases, death. The theft of Anhydrous Ammonia from farms throughout Ohio and the Ashtabula county area have become a routine crime for law enforcement. Anhydrous use in the production of methamphetamine started in the mid to late 1990’s. Additionally, Anhydrous Ammonia along with other chemicals used in production can cause explosions and fires requiring fire departments to respond to hazards that can cause injury or death.

Anhydrous Ammonia is approximately eighty-two percent nitrogen, which makes it very efficient as a fertilizer. Over a half of a century it was been used safely and effectively by farmers to fertilize a variety of crops. Anhydrous is stored in large and portable pressurized tanks at farms. Those that steal anhydrous frequently cut bolts, remove locks, utilize garden or rubber hoses to siphon ammonia from tanks, and collect ammonia in open containers or propane tanks. Propane tanks are not designed to store anhydrous ammonia and can explode when outside temperatures rise and pressure builds inside the tank. Deteriorated valves that appear a bluish green can also leak and break causing an explosion. Some thefts go undetected because of the minimal amount taken and on occasions the whole tank is taken. To deter the thefts of anhydrous, security methods have to be employed but the cost for these measures to farmers outweighs the cost of the theft placing a burden on the farmer.

**Is it true that Meth Labs are only a problem in rural communities?** No, however they are more likely to be found there because meth cooks are smart enough to know that rural communities tend to lack the available resources to address the problem. Meth Labs can be constructed in places you could never imagine. The Meth cook doesn’t want to be bothered during the production process so wherever they hide out of the purview of law enforcement is a perfect place for a lab. This is why they call them “clandestine” laboratories. “Clandestine” is defined by Webster’s dictionary as “to hide”, “held in or conducted in secrecy”, or “secret”. A rural farm, vacant land, mobile homes, car trunks, rental homes, backwoods cabins, hotel rooms, trailers and maybe your

neighbor's back yard is a perfect place for a meth lab. Most of the methamphetamine in Ashtabula County is produced locally. Typical labs are filthy, garbage strewn, dangerous places, soaked with toxic chemicals and the needles of those addicts who hangout there. Signs of a drug lab could include frequent visitors, late night operations, occupants that appear unemployed but seem to have money, neighbors that seem paranoid and unfriendly, high levels of security, chemical odors, no garbage disposal, and burn pits.

Other indicators of clandestine labs include strong odors of ether, ammonia, and acetone. Residences will have blackened out windows, excessive amounts of trash that could include antifreeze, drain cleaners and mason jars.

**Common Chemicals used include the following:**

Ephedrine	Red Phosphorous
Pseudoephedrine	Sodium Hydroxide
Lithium Batteries	Salt
Sodium Metal	Sulfuric Acid
Anhydrous Ammonia	Trichloroethane
Toluene	Cold tablets
Acetone	Matches
Methanol	Paint Thinner
Alcohol	Drain Cleaner
Muriatic Acid	Red Devil Lye
Iodine Flakes or Crystals	Ether

**Common equipment will include the following:**

Pyrex/Corning dishes	Hotplate
Jugs	Strainers
Bottles	Aluminum foil
Funnels	Propane Cylinders
Coffee Filters	Valves
Rubber tubing	Pipe wrenches
Paper towels	Rubber/Plastic Hosing
Robber gloves	Blenders
Gas cans	Glassware
Tape/Clamps	Beakers

Meth presents an increased risk to the "cooker" and those around during the processing stage as the chemicals are caustic, explosive and corrosive. The chemicals are mixed and heated causing them to be even more unstable and

unpredictable. The fumes and lethal gases enter the floors, walls, ceilings and move into ventilation and heating systems. Spills of chemicals soak into carpets, wood floors and drywall and decontamination is nearly impossible. The “cooker” in order to avoid discovery dumps the toxic waste products into waste water systems, back yards, streams and any where the unsuspecting person could find. Each pound of processed methamphetamine leaves between five to six pounds of toxic waste and the chemicals alone cause severe health problems, including lung damage and burns. Clandestine Meth cookers often dump this waste into the ground, streams and rivers, and sewers.

During the early years of methamphetamine the agency responsible for suppressing the drug was the Drug Enforcement Administration. As the problem has become epidemic in proportions the Drug Enforcement Administration is responding less and less, leaving the problem to local law enforcement. However, cleanup costs continue to be paid by the federal government, which relieves one burden on local government.

**Let’s discover what that burden could be when an untrained law enforcement officer approaches a meth lab with the wrong intentions?**

Funding to cover clandestine laboratory cleanup comes from a special fund set aside by the U.S. Congress. The Drug Enforcement Administration is to be notified by local law enforcement immediately upon the discovery of a clandestine laboratory and prior to entering. If this notification process fails to be adhered to the cleanup costs could revert to the local jurisdiction.

Every cleanup requires property assessments and decontamination techniques to remove the chemicals and make the area safe. These companies performing the cleanup require specialized equipment and training. The cleanup involving one floor of a home can run from \$3,000.00 to \$8,000.00. Depending on the length of time the lab was operating and the materials requiring replacement costs can run as high as \$40,000.00. What about non-physical structures such as land where the chemicals were dumped? Contaminated soil must be removed and incinerated. Will a home owner’s insurance policy cover the cleanup costs? What about the homeowner with the meth lab that sells his home to the unsuspecting home buyer?

Currently no official standard for meth lab property cleanup exists. However, the only sure cleanup involves the total demolition of the property and removal of the waste. The next best resolution is to hire an environmental cleanup company trained to remove and cleanup hazardous material.

**Public Health Role**

The removal of chemicals and hazards from a methamphetamine laboratory does not constitute the end of the problem. Where law enforcement will continue the investigation, arrest and prosecute the offender(s), the site of the laboratory now becomes the responsibility of the local health authority.

Law Enforcement will make every effort to remove visible chemicals and hazards found at the methamphetamine laboratory but that alone will not solve the problem.

Local health departments once notified by law enforcement must post the site of the laboratory as being “contaminated” and unsafe to enter. Upon completion of the local health department investigation the property shall again be posted “do not occupy”.

**The local health department has the following responsibilities:**

- Post warnings on the site of the laboratory
- Inform the public of the site hazards and hazards in general
- Assess the extent of the contamination and insure that it is localized
- Oversee decontamination if possible and determine when structure is safe to reoccupy
- Assure that cleanup is conducted according to local guidelines and that waste is disposed of properly

**Multi-jurisdictional Law Enforcement Task Forces**

In the early 80’s during the same time crack cocaine sales were on the rise the federal government began funding drug task forces across the nation. Today, some of these same task forces exist and in Ohio approximately thirty four drug task forces have the responsibilities of investigating drug-related crimes. Not every county in Ohio has a task force and many like the one in Ashtabula County operate regionally. Task Forces are generally comprised of law enforcement officers from several departments within a county and have the support of additional federal and state officers. Very few law enforcement agencies are capable of investigating narcotics related crimes on their own and because of this the task force concept has survived over twenty years.

Ohio is scrambling to address the methamphetamine epidemic and the responsibility to address this problem has fallen on task forces, with assistance from the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation, the Drug Enforcement Agency and local law enforcement. These agencies work jointly to address the problem that will eventually fall entirely on local authorities. To date Ohio has approximately one hundred fifty law enforcement officers trained to respond to Meth labs but no lead state agency has been named.

Why is the response to this drug so different? Because of the hazardous chemicals the Environmental Protection Agency has mandated that public employees must receive specific lab certification training. This week long training session and the initial personal protection equipment to safely respond costs approximately \$5,000.00. Then all response personnel must have an

initial and yearly medical evaluation and continual health monitoring must be done by the agency having the trained personnel. A minimum standard for OSHA safety rules is four trained clandestine laboratory technicians and a site safety officer at each laboratory. Those agencies not abiding by OSHA/EPA standards face extreme financial liabilities. Not all law enforcement officers are trained to respond to meth labs.

However, it is important that all officers and other first responders have hazardous material awareness training so they have the ability to recognize any hazards they confront and the knowledge of how to secure the area.

**Why is it necessary to develop a strategy for response?** So our jails and treatment facilities are not overwhelmed with meth addicts and families are not destroyed. Those who make meth there drug of choice experience at least a twelve hour high but a lifetime of addiction. A strategy allows for all agencies to move forward with the same goal and cooperation.

### **Impact on Neighboring States**

Because Ashtabula County borders the State of Pennsylvania, meth manufacturers often travel to and from Pennsylvania on our highways with chemicals, box laboratories and the finished product. Known meth manufacturers and users from the State of Indiana have also been present in Ashtabula County. In 2003, contiguous states to Ohio had the following meth labs:

Pennsylvania	52	labs
Indiana	844	labs
Kentucky	475	labs
Michigan	281	labs
West Virginia	63	labs

It is important that we pay close attention to the pattern of lab seizures in states bordering us and consider that these are known/seized labs. These lab statistics are indicative of what the western states faced twenty years ago and as methamphetamine migrated east we in Ohio are faced with today.

### **Social Costs**

In or near a clandestine methamphetamine lab law enforcement will likely find a child. In most cases, children are taken into protective custody and parents rarely get them back because they can't stay away from the drug. These children are found abused and neglected and the addict does not realize that children are more easily affected. The lungs of children have been scarred and they develop severe cases of bronchitis. In addition to those living inside a meth lab the neighbors can be affected by simply breathing the chemicals over the long term.

Social workers talking to meth addicts who have recently been to a meth lab have developed illnesses related to the inhalation of chemicals. These illnesses describe the difference, between meth and other drugs as you don't have to smoke it snort it or shoot it to damage your body. Just being around someone whose clothes have soaked up the chemicals is enough to make you ill.

**Have you ever smelled the clothes of a cigarette smoker?** What about those meth users that inject? The sharing of needles means many meth users are contracting HIV, hepatitis B, hepatitis C and other illnesses. A meth abuser had a poster on a wall that said, **“They say meth won't kill you. But you'll wish it had.”** Dr. Alex Stalcup, a 30 year veteran of treating meth addiction asked us to **“Imagine taking a year's worth of life and using it up in a week.”**

**How does Methamphetamine affect our communities? Let's take a look at some of the societal costs:**

- Death, injury and illness resulting from the use and manufacturing of meth
- Property damage from fires and explosions
- Contaminated buildings and soils, water and air from toxic elements and by-products
- Additional spending to cover law enforcement costs and social services
- Increased medical costs and emergency rooms for meth users
- Violence associated with meth use and crimes such as: domestic violence, child abuse, automobile accidents
- Spread of infectious diseases
- Property depreciation

### **Environmental Costs**

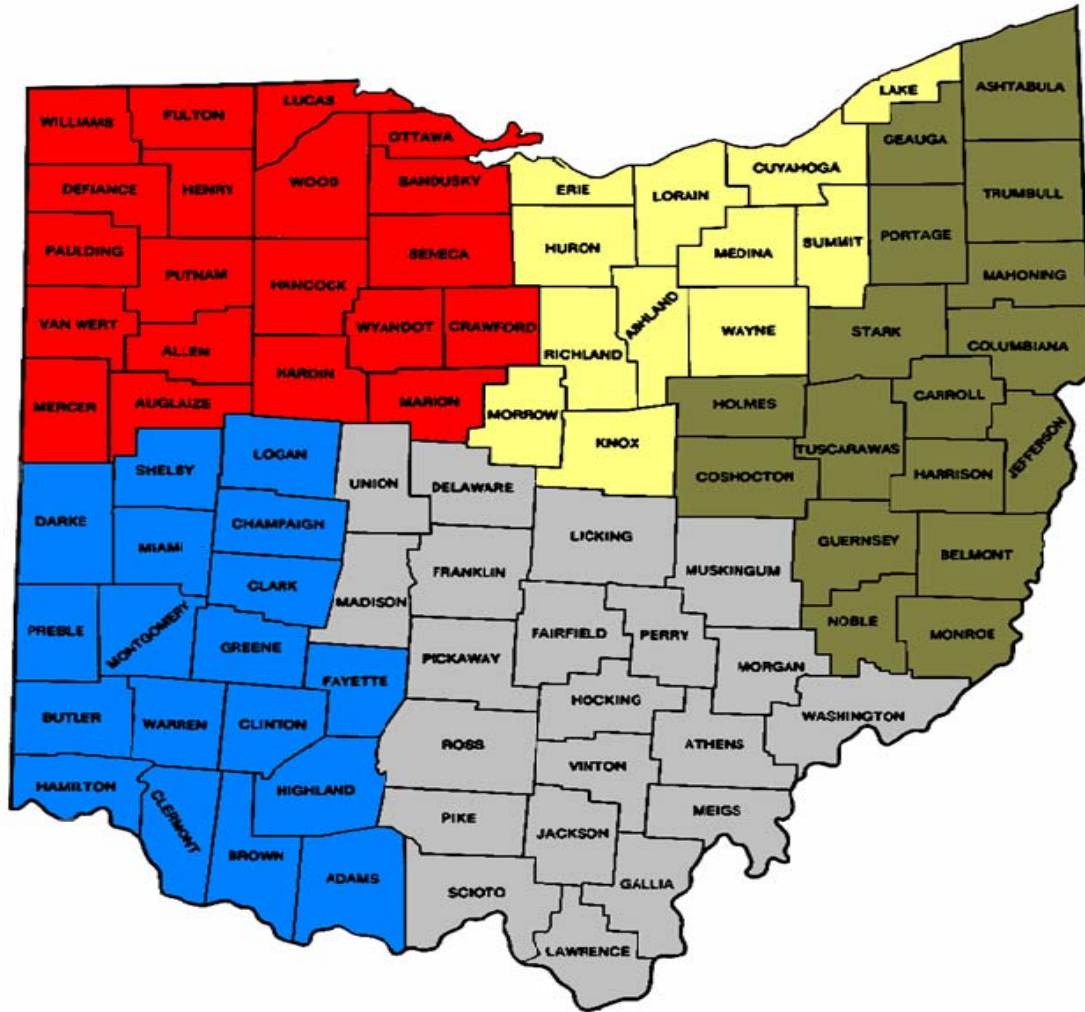
Meth labs are hazardous waste dumps and without a coordinated response renters and home buyers could be moving into this trap.

For every pound of manufactured methamphetamine there is five to six pounds of toxic waste materials to be disposed of. Meth cookers have been known to leave the waste at the scene of the laboratory, dumping it into streams and rivers, on the ground or placing it into a trash bag to be removed by trash haulers. The potential exists that these chemicals will reach ground water sources and destroy vegetation and wildlife.

Notification of the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency is crucial to any investigation where the local health authority has determined chemical dumping has occurred. Irresponsible homeowners and renters could be held responsible for environmental cleanup should a court of record determine they had knowledge of the meth operations and failed to act.

## Methamphetamine in Ohio

In 2003 the first statewide study of methamphetamine laboratories was conducted by the Bureau of Criminal Identification and Investigation. Although the study was non-scientific it confirmed a significant increase in methamphetamine laboratories over the last three years. The study represented responses to surveys distributed to over 572 law enforcement agencies across the state of Ohio. The study also indicated increases in arrests, availability and trafficking of methamphetamine.



The breakdown of Meth labs in Ohio is as follows:

- 1999-24 labs
- 2000-36 labs
- 2001-96 labs
- 2002-114 labs
- 2003-269 labs to date

The State of Ohio has eighty-eight counties and the top five counties with methamphetamine laboratory activity in 2003 are as follows:

Summit County  
Clermont County  
Ashtabula County

Adams County  
Franklin County

## **Treatment**

Do we want to pay additional tax dollars to fund treatment programs for meth users? In other communities public funds are made available but they usually don't last very long. This is a question that needs to be answered as the drug user is truly the problem.

Cognitive behavioral interventions have been determined to be the best treatment methods. This standardized approach is designed to modify thinking, expectancies, and behaviors. Additionally coping skills are developed to deal with the stresses of life. In some communities methamphetamine support groups have shown some success. There currently is no pharmacological relief for dependence on amphetamine drugs.

Treatment is sometimes provided in intensive outpatient programs. These programs include therapy sessions combined with techniques to improve coping and stress reduction skills.

Professional's in drug treatment have found anti-depressant medication to be useful for meth addicts during there abstinence stage when depression becomes a problem. In emergency rooms where meth overdoses are prominent physicians have had to adopt specific protocols. These protocols address treating the physical symptoms immediately through ice baths and the use of anticonvulsant drugs.

Short term effects for the meth user include increased attention and decreased fatigue, increased activity, decreased appetite, euphoria, increased respiration, and hyperthermia. Long term effects include drug dependence/addiction, paranoia, hallucinations, mood swings, repetitive motor activity, stroke and weight loss.

## **Prosecution**

The following are laws related to the production of methamphetamine, sale and possession of methamphetamine, and other applicable laws from the Ohio Revised Code. It is these very statutes that law enforcement uses to address the problems with methamphetamine in Ashtabula County.

## **Illegal Manufacture of Methamphetamine (2925.04)**

### 1. Manufacture (2925.01 (J))

“.....process, make, prepare, or otherwise engage in any part of the production of a drug, by preparation, extraction, chemical synthesis, or compounding, or any combination of the same, includes packaging, repackaging, labeling, and other activities incident to production” (emphasis added)

### 2. Penalty

- a. F-2, mandatory prison, mandatory fine
- b. F-1, if in the vicinity of a school, juvenile, or on public premise
- c. mandatory license suspension

## **Illegal Assembly or Possession of Chemicals for the Manufacture of Drugs (2925.041)**

### 1. 2925.041 (B)

“In a prosecution under this section, it is not necessary to alledge or prove that the offender assembled or possessed all chemicals necessary to manufacture a controlled substance in Schedule I or II. The assembly or possession of a single chemical that may be used in the manufacture of a controlled substance in a Schedule I or II, with the intent to manufacture a controlled substance in either schedule, is sufficient to violate this section”

### 2. Penalty

- a. F-3, 2929.13 (c) applies
- b. mandatory fine
- c. mandatory license suspension

## **Aggravated Possession of Drugs (2925.11 (A))**

### 1. Penalty

- a. level of felony determined by amount of drug
- b. mandatory license suspension
- c. mandatory fine if F-3 or higher

## **Permitting Drug Abuse (2925.13 (B))**

### 1. Penalty

- a. M-1
- b. mandatory license forfeiture

### 2. Real estate used is nuisance subject to abatement pursuant to Chapter 3767 of the ORC

## **Possession of Criminal Tools (2923.24)**

1. Penalty
  - a. F-5 if the item intended for use in commission of felony

## **Endangering Children (2919.22 (A))**

1. Penalty
  - a. M-1 unless offender has prior conviction, then F-4
  - b. F-3 if child suffers serious physical harm

Other penalties pursued by prosecutors include forfeitures of property used in the course of drug manufacturing, sale and possession. Additionally, should the property become a nuisance because of the continual drug activity abatement laws can call for the boarding of the home.

Many avenues are available to address the meth problem and provide public awareness. Some of these include the advertising of addresses where methamphetamine laboratories are located, legislation to address the theft of anhydrous ammonia, and obtaining video confessions from suspects as part of a plea agreement to learn more about methamphetamine for educational purposes.

Law Enforcement will address these issues regularly with the Ashtabula Prosecutors Office.

## **How Ashtabula County will fight Methamphetamine**

### **Training for law enforcement**

It is apparent that the majority of street officers still possess no training in the simple recognition and dangers of clandestine methamphetamine labs and/or hazardous materials. Training has been offered by several agencies but those communities that have not seen a lab are hesitant to fund training for personnel, funding does not exist in those communities, or adequate staffing is not available.

The need exists to have more personnel trained and equipped to respond to meth labs but available training classes are accommodating the entire country and some training must be conducted by the Drug Enforcement Administration for it to be accepted. Training in methamphetamine awareness can take place at the local level and these opportunities will be made available. As training opportunities

become available notices are forwarded to law enforcement agencies throughout the county.

### **Educating the Communities**

It is the responsibility of local government officials to insure that the public is properly educated on the dangers and characteristics of meth labs. People need to recognize that a problem exists and that law enforcement can not solve it alone. A cooperative effort can only come when all levels of government, all agencies, businesses, farmers and the general public understand the extent of the problem. Precursor chemicals are stolen from area retailers, who can provide important information to law enforcement if they were aware of the problem.

Many people ask how they can help. All drug dealers and methamphetamine manufacturers possess common behavioral indicators. These habits listed in this guide to comprehensive response are concerns that your local law enforcement agency should be apprised of immediately. Do not confront individuals or enter into a suspected lab.

Educating the business community is a key component of this plan as it is these retailers that sell pre-cursors for the production of methamphetamine. Types of businesses involved in the sale of these pre-cursors include:

Hardware Stores	Gas Stations
Grocery Stores	Truck Stops
Convenient Stores	Health Food Stores
Livestock supply Stores	Home Improvement Stores
Drug Stores	

While the purchase of these pre-cursors alone does not constitute criminal behavior the retailer should be aware that these items are used in the manufacturing of methamphetamine. Purchases of these items in large quantities and the theft of these items in large quantities should indicate suspicious behavior on the part of the individual involved.

Some common characteristics of purchasers intending to use the items for an illegal purpose may include the following:

- Persons acting suspicious
- Persons who appear dirty or disheveled
- Persons who request specific OTC's by name
- Persons who make large and repeated purchases
- Persons emitting chemical odors
- Children purchasing these items

While these characteristics and large purchases of pre-cursors (Identified in this plan) are not evidence of a crime they are worthy of reporting to law enforcement.

Providing information, such as a license plate allows law enforcement to identify the individuals. In most cases we will already be aware of the subject's identity but knowing that the subject purchased these items tell us that they are preparing for a new "cook". A friendly tip to local law enforcement or the task force whether anonymous or not does not infer guilt. However, it does allow law enforcement to follow-up and possibly prevent more drug from entering our communities.

Any information about the customer that can be written down would allow local law enforcement or the task force to check their Watch List and determine what businesses these suspect's are frequenting. It is not the policy of any law enforcement agency to release information provided of this nature. The list below can be used as a guide in determining information that would be valuable to law enforcement.

Sex	License plate(s)
Age	Item purchased
Names	# of persons present
Clothing descriptions	Skin tone and hair color
Vehicle descriptions	

Often times two or more people could be purchasing items simultaneously or stealing the entire shelf of cold medicine. Law Enforcement needs assistance from the business community. Reporting these sales and thefts goes along way in helping to curve the methamphetamine problem facing Ashtabula County.

Additional measures available to the business community include the limiting of single purchase items, such as cold medicines.

### **Strengthening cooperation among law enforcement**

County law enforcement must share the responsibility of the problem. Through mutual aid agreements all communities and law enforcement agencies must commit to training personnel in methamphetamine awareness and clandestine laboratory response.

It is important for law enforcement in Ashtabula County to have an adequate number of trained clandestine laboratory technicians capable of responding to a methamphetamine lab. These technicians should be from county, city and township law enforcement agencies throughout the county of Ashtabula.

By sharing these overall responsibilities the problem can be addressed more efficiently and the costs of methamphetamine response will have a reduced impact on individual jurisdictions.

A centralized callout system for clandestine laboratory response will be developed to insure an adequate number of trained lab technicians respond to the meth lab site and that proper notification is given to the Drug Enforcement Administration.

### **Reaching out to affected individuals**

Property owners who rent or lease need to be aware of simple non-intrusive methods of protecting their property. These methods include simple screening of clients, rental agreements, background and employment checks and regular inspections of property. Because of the equipment and supplies required for meth production a simple cleanup is highly unlikely. Surprise or unannounced visits/inspections can go a long way in preventing any laboratory construction.

Talk to and know your neighbors. Inform them that your property is rented and ask them to assist you in watching the residence. Provide them with contact numbers in case of an emergency.

Screening prospective clients by checking credit history and references is an important step. Get written permission from a prospective client to check on any criminal history prior to renting the property. Provide them with a rental agreement that includes periodic inspections and let them know that you regularly check with neighbors. Confirm the names of all those who will be residing at the property and determine who will be paying the bills. Keep good records of your tenant's vehicles and license plate numbers.

If you are a Hotel owner it is important to tell your clerks to be alert to guests who pay with cash, have numerous luggage bags or Rubbermaid containers, no identification or credit cards, do not list any vehicles (Fear of law enforcement), live locally and those that appear covert, paranoid, suspicious, or nervous. It is also important to look at the appearance of the individual as it relates to their clothing, face and hands and teeth. Hotel owners must also insure that employees do not clean rooms where suspected meth manufacturing may have occurred to protect the health of that employee.

A failure to follow these recommendations can lead to:

- Loss of rent
- Civil penalties
- Damaged property
- Decline in property values
- Dangerous, threatening tenants
- Resentful and angry neighbors
- Loss of regular tenants
- Responsibility for cleanup costs
- Negative publicity
- Loss of employees

## **Building this Awareness Plan**

### **Law Enforcement Goals**

- **Develop a central location for all intelligence concerning suspected methamphetamine cooks, traffickers and users with the county and state**
- **Work closely with prosecutors and judges to hold offenders accountable**
- **Reduce the number of labs with pro-active enforcement**
- **Reduce the number of injuries/deaths**
- **Protecting the children found at meth labs, getting them the proper medical attention and provide shelter as needed.**
- **Establish a meth tip line**
- **Establish harsher laws against meth cooks and anhydrous thefts**
- **Provide training for law enforcement and other responders**
- **Training for citizens/community**
- **Seizing and filing for forfeiture of property or assets of the meth cooker**

### **Environmental Goals**

- **Determine cleanup issues inside and outside of a methamphetamine lab**
- **Utilize current health codes with the Ashtabula County Health Department enforce “do not occupy” and to board up methamphetamine lab sites**
- **Develop a notification system for the EPA and local health department to make them aware of methamphetamine lab sites**
- **Controlling the sale and distribution of essential and precursor chemicals used in clandestine drug labs, making it harder to obtain these chemicals and in return may increase the production and costs and potentially reducing demand.**
- **Establish proper clean up guidelines**
- **Provide landlords and hotel/motel managers with proper clean-up guidelines**
- **Require local health department contact and record keeping concerning hazardous chemicals**
- **Assist farmers with security measures to reduce the thefts of anhydrous ammonia**

### **Media and Public Awareness Goals**

- **Provide public education for each community in Ashtabula County on the dangers of methamphetamine**
- **Hold press conferences with the media to discuss the meth problem in Ashtabula County**
- **Provide the media with press releases on current meth lab cases**

- **Make a list of media contacts names, numbers and e-mail**
- **Solicit funds from private sectors in order to finance an anti-meth campaign**
- **Make available a public information packet on methamphetamine**
- **Utilize the task force web site as a meth education tool**

### **Prevention and Treatment Goals**

- **Determine options available to meth abusers as far as treatment availability**
- **Produce a methamphetamine awareness video tape for distribution**
- **Establish treatment protocol for meth addiction**
- **Increase awareness of the meth problem**
- **Provide treatment to meth users**

### **Prosecution and Judicial Goals**

- **Increase court costs and probation fees to pay for more probation officers**
- **Increase fines and penalties for repeated offenders**
- **Establish communication between legislators and the public to propose new law(s) regarding meth**
- **Require mandatory law enforcement training**
- **Develop a mandatory drug treatment program and extend outpatient care to one year or until probation and/or sentencing has been completed to show progress of treatment**
- **Encourage addicts to seek treatment over jail**

### **Retail Goals**

- **Provide a list of possible items that may be purchased at their business**
- **Improve communications with retailers**
- **Have retailers flag specific products that are used for the production of meth, keep accurate inventory and report thefts of these products**
- **Provide awareness information to hotel and motel owners**
- **Provide meth awareness training to those service agencies (utility) that must respond to outside residences (Gas, Electric, Phone, Garbage, etc.)**
- **Develop posters for employees to refer to that detail methamphetamine precursors**
- **Provide suspicious activity form so retailers can report to law enforcement**

## Emergency Response Guidelines

The goal of these response guidelines is to provide a uniform response protocol for all employees of Ashtabula County and the Townships and Villages located within Ashtabula County that through the course of their employment may come across a hazardous material situation like a clandestine methamphetamine laboratory. Additionally, these guidelines provide recommended practices to private entities when developing policies and procedures.

The TAG Law Enforcement Task Force has designed these guidelines to be adopted as a policy by local government entities for the safety of employees, the public, protection of the crime scene and to provide for an organized and swift response to the scene by all necessary agencies.

Clandestine methamphetamine laboratories are extremely dangerous by nature and must be treated with total due regard for the safety of the employee. In keeping with this, the employee shall immediately upon discovery of a suspected clandestine laboratory, leave the immediate area and return to their vehicle. The following notification guidelines are to be followed:

### A. Notification Guidelines

1. Employees shall contact their own agency supervisor and advised them of the situation. Either the employee or the agency supervisor shall then immediately contact 911 to notify local law enforcement. The employee or supervisor will notify the dispatcher of what they encountered. Dispatch will then provide the employee with necessary steps to take. These steps will include the employee remaining at the scene until advised to leave by the first responding law enforcement officer.
2. The dispatcher shall follow there own internal guidelines on dispatching the call. However, because of the danger and financial liabilities evidenced by improper responses the responding officer's supervisor shall immediately contact a representative from the TAG Law Enforcement Task Force. It will then be the responsibility of the task force to insure that qualified clan lab investigator(s) are notified to respond. **For purposes of this response, a methamphetamine laboratory shall be an actual working lab, a site where chemicals are disposed/dumped and anywhere chemicals utilized in the manufacturing of methamphetamine are located.**
3. A representative of the TAG Law Enforcement Task Force or a qualified clan lab investigator(s) contacted by the task force will

respond and be briefed by the 1<sup>st</sup> responding officer and with the assistance of that uniformed law enforcement officer conduct an assessment of the situation, to include the existence of a lab, hazardous material and additional response units required to mitigate the problem. The law enforcement agency in the jurisdiction of the methamphetamine laboratory will maintain at a minimum one (1) uniform law enforcement officer until all other agencies have left the scene. Prior to the arrival of the task force officer the 1<sup>st</sup> responding officer on scene will be required to address the following:

- Assess the situation
- Isolate the scene when possible
- Establish scene control/begin log in/log out sheet
- Prevent unnecessary hazardous situations (explosions/cross contamination)
- Identify injuries
- Incident description
- Describe materials involved/If known
- Recommend action steps to supervisor

4. Upon confirming that sufficient evidence exists that the presence of a clan lab is likely additional personnel will be summoned to the scene. These personnel will include certified clandestine laboratory technicians and site safety personnel. Steps will be taken to secure the site and obtain further legal justification to mitigate the hazardous situation. The task force shall be responsible for making notification to the local office of the Drug Enforcement Administration. Clandestine Laboratory Technicians and Site Safety officers when available (Due to training inabilities) will be in charge of the laboratory scene. A Unified Command structure will be implemented to insure that all emergency response agencies are prepared for any emergencies that might exist or may occur. No entry into a methamphetamine laboratory will occur in Ashtabula County unless the following agencies are on scene:

- Clandestine Laboratory Technicians
- Local Fire Department
- Uniform Law Enforcement personnel
- Ashtabula County Hazardous Material Unit

5. If additional law enforcement agencies are required it will be the responsibility of the task force or the senior emergency response person on the scene (in cases of emergency only) to

make notifications. Additionally, resources such as utilities and other government agencies may be requested to the scene to provide their unique services into the investigation on an as needed basis.

6. The Ashtabula County Hazardous Material Team shall be requested at the scene of a confirmed methamphetamine laboratory. When a clandestine laboratory team and hazardous material team are onsite, measures will be taken jointly to render areas safe and to insure proper decontamination of personnel. Once the clandestine laboratory response team has rendered the site safe from suspects and hazards on-scene command will revert to the task force or local law enforcement agency and Haz-Mat personnel. Entering of the residence to obtain further evidentiary materials will be accomplished only when proper PPE is worn in accordance with that determined by clandestine laboratory technicians. This PPE may be limited to proper shoe and glove protection. The ACHMT shall assist with decontamination of all law enforcement personnel, suspects, victims or those others present who Haz Mat has determined could be contaminated.
7. The TAG Law Enforcement Task Force or the senior clandestine laboratory officer/site safety officer on site shall then contact the Ashtabula County Health Department concerning the lab site, the safety of those currently occupying the structure and the need to isolate the residence or area until it has been decontaminated or safe to reoccupy. The following conditions will be considered when choosing to allow the home to be reoccupied.

- Conditions of residence
- Vermin infestation
- Chemicals present
- Hazardous condition of chemicals present
- Ground water runoff concerns
- Chemicals in septic tank
- Electrical hazards
- Gas/Propane hazards
- Any hazards determined to affect the home occupant

8. A copy of documentation completed by the TAG Law Enforcement Task Force or any certified clandestine laboratory technician shall be forwarded to the Ashtabula County Health Department or local health authority and

the Ohio Environmental Protection Agency within 72 hours of the incident.

### **Additional Guidelines and Protocol**

When a clandestine methamphetamine laboratory is discovered in Ashtabula County a multi-agency response will be required to address chemical hazards, fire hazards, and environmental hazards. This multi-agency response will require action steps by each agency requested to respond to a methamphetamine laboratory. The following procedures will be followed to insure that any hazards are mitigated in the short and long term so no further damage can be caused.

#### **County Health Department (440-576-6010)**

#### **City Health Departments (Conneaut-440-593-3087)(Ashtabula-440-992-7123)**

1. The health department will be requested to evaluate the residence to determine if the residence can be occupied following a methamphetamine cleanup.
2. This evaluation can be conducted with the assistance of the onsite chemical clean up team and the counties haz-mat team.
3. Immediately following a cleanup the task force will post the property as contaminated and the health department may make similar postings.
4. Any posting by the health department for contaminated property may also contain the language “do not occupy”.
5. Any postings that contain “do not occupy” will be filed with the county recorders office.
6. Once a building is posted “do not occupy” it can not be reoccupied until it is inspected by and approved for occupancy by the county health board.
7. The county health department shall ensure that the owner of a residence where a methamphetamine lab has been located shall not be marketed (sold) in the county of Ashtabula until such time as the health department and the EPA have determined the site to be safe.

#### **East Ohio Gas (1-877-542-2630)**

1. If the site of the methamphetamine laboratory is serviced by a gas or propane company they will be requested to the scene to evaluate the hazards and evaluate additional hazards when the residence is unable to be occupied.
2. If the local fire department/haz mat team and the task force determine that any open gas/propane lines to the residence pose additional hazards they will request a service disconnect.

### **CEI ( 1-800-589-3101)**

1. If the site of a methamphetamine laboratory is serviced by an electrical supplier they will be requested to the scene to evaluate hazards and evaluate additional hazards when the residence is unable to be occupied.
2. If the local fire department/haz mat team or the task force determines that any electrical connections pose additional hazards the local fire chief may order the disconnection of the electrical meter.
3. Once electrical disconnects are made a notice will be posted in addition to other notices that a power shutoff has occurred.
4. All electrical disconnects shall be made from the road.

### **Hazardous Material Unit (440-576-0055)**

1. Upon the task force or a certified clandestine laboratory technician determining that an actual hazardous environment exists the Ashtabula County Haz Mat team will be requested at the scene to conduct decontamination of law enforcement, suspects, victims, equipment and other that may have become contaminated.
2. When hazardous chemicals are present at the scene of any methamphetamine laboratory decontamination by all subjects on the sign-in sheet will be mandatory.

### **Ashtabula County/Township Maintenance Department**

1. When the location of a methamphetamine laboratory is a residence and that residence is determined to be unfit for habitation because of hazards it shall be boarded up to prevent unauthorized entry, until a court of record determines otherwise.
2. Property board up will be the responsibility of the jurisdiction where the methamphetamine lab is located.
3. Every jurisdiction should have on stock the needed supplies/materials to conduct the boarding of at least a one or two story home.

### **Ohio Environmental Protection Agency (1-800-621-8431)**

1. The Ohio Environmental Protection Agency shall be notified of all methamphetamine laboratories to determine environmental needs.
2. The EPA will conduct tests in accordance with the Ohio Revised Code.

## **Glossary of Methamphetamine Terms**

### **ACETONE**

A colorless, volatile, extremely flammable liquid, widely used as an organic solvent.

### **ANHYDROUS**

Without water, especially water of crystallization.

### **AMMONIA**

A colorless, pungent gas extensively used to manufacture fertilizers and a wide variety of nitrogen-containing organic and inorganic chemicals.

### **CLANDESTINE**

Kept or done in secret, often in order to conceal an illicit or improper purpose.

### **EPHEDRINE**

A white, odorless, powdered or crystalline alkaloid isolated from shrubs of the genus *Ephedra* or made synthetically. It is used in the treatment of allergies and asthma.

### **PSEUDOEPHEDRINE**

An isomer of ephedrine used primarily as a decongestant.

### **LITHIUM**

A soft, silvery, highly reactive metallic element that is used as a heat transfer medium, in thermonuclear weapons, and in various alloys, ceramics, and optical forms of glass.

### **METHANOL**

An alcohol fuel.

### **MURIATIC ACID**

Known as hydrochloric acid - A clear, colorless, fuming, poisonous, highly acidic aqueous solution of hydrogen chloride, used as a chemical intermediate and in petroleum production, ore reduction, food processing, pickling, and metal cleaning. It is found in the stomach in dilute form.

### **PRECURSOR**

One that precedes and indicates the approach of another-A substance from which another substance is formed.

## **RED DEVIL LYE**

A drain cleaner made of one hundred percent lye that is very caustic.

## **RED PHOSPHOROUS**

Manufacture of safety-matches, electric lamp bulbs, chemical reagents, phosphorous alloys, pesticides, and for applications of metallurgical industry and organic synthesis, and etc.

## **SODIUM HYDROXIDE**

In a solution is a white, odorless, non-volatile solution. It will not burn but it is highly reactive. It can react violently with water and numerous commonly encountered materials, generating enough heat to ignite nearby combustible materials.

## **SODIUM METAL**

Extremely flammable and causes burns-A chemical that reacts rapidly in water

## **SULFURIC ACID**

Sulfuric acid is important in the production of fertilizers such as ammonium sulfate (sulfate of ammonia), and super phosphate, which is formed when rock phosphate is treated with sulfuric acid. Sulfuric acid is used to remove oxides from iron and steel before galvanizing or electroplating Sulfuric acid will "suck" water out of carbohydrates and some other organic compounds which contain oxygen and hydrogen. For example, sulfuric acid will "suck" water out of sucrose, (cane sugar) to produce a spongy mass of carbon: Sulfuric acid is used in the production of nitroglycerine, an inorganic ester & organic nitrate, which is used as an explosive but can also be used as a *vasodilator*, a substance that dilates blood vessels and can be used in the treatment of certain types of heart disease.

## **TOLUENE**

A colorless gas that has a sweet pungent odor. It is also used in making paints, paint thinners, fingernail polish, lacquers, adhesives, and rubber in some printing and leather tanning processes.

## **TRICHLOROETHANE**

A heavy colorless highly toxic liquid used as a solvent to clean electronic components and for dry cleaning and as a fumigant; causes cancer and liver and lung damage.

## **TWEAKING-“TWEAKERS”**

The use of a drug for a long period of time where the user does not sleep-The on and off high where the users activity levels increase and they sometimes become paranoid

## **XYLENE**

Used as a cleaning agent and paint thinner it is a colorless, sweet smelling gas produced from petroleum-This liquid is flammable

## **Summary**

Whereas the TAG Law Enforcement Task Force has attempted to educate and address all concerns in this community awareness plan and emergency response guide it would be a formidable task to do so. The prevention, enforcement, prosecution, treatment and environmental issues associated with the production and use of methamphetamine are so complex that each discipline must study their particular issue to educate themselves.

The intent of this plan is to share information with those who don't recognize the totality of the problem and to provide guidance to other individuals and agencies for an effective response.

If Ashtabula County is to address the methamphetamine problem it must have a comprehensive effort involving all government agencies and the public.

## **Acknowledgements**

Ashtabula County Sheriff's Office

Ashtabula County Prosecutor's Office

## **Resources**

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Initial Strategy for the Ohio Methamphetamine Clandestine Lab Epidemic-Peter J. Tobin-BCI & I-2001

MSNBC-Special Report-“Toxic high poisons a region” (5 parts) Internet  
Let's look at the problem from where it began to where it is today. (DEA US MAPS)

National Institute of Drug Abuse, Research Report, “Methamphetamine Abuse and Addiction” January 2002

Neighborhood Resource Guide-2003-[www.streetdrugs.org](http://www.streetdrugs.org)

Michigan Methamphetamine Control Strategy July 2002

U.S. Department of Justice (Office of Community Oriented Policing Services)  
[www.cops.usdoj.gov](http://www.cops.usdoj.gov)

U.S. Drug Enforcement Administration [www.dea.gov](http://www.dea.gov)

National Institute on Drug Abuse [www.nida.gov](http://www.nida.gov)

Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [www.samhsa.gov](http://www.samhsa.gov)

Office of National Drug Control Policy [www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov)

Ohio Revised Code