

Hope for Our Families

By Judy Murphy

The Iowa Drug Endangered Children Program is progressively working on ways that communities and agencies can work together to promote safety and stability for Iowa's children living in homes where methamphetamine is being manufactured. Although the problem is overwhelming and devastating to our children and our families, THERE IS HOPE.

Much has been reported about the effect that methamphetamine has on our children, our families and our communities. However, one critical issue that often goes unreported is the human aspect of addiction. Once treated, many addicts become very respectful, active and driven members of their communities. Support is a vital component for success.

The Iowa Department of Human Services, Iowa Department of Public Health, Iowa Department of Corrections, Governor's Office of Drug Control Policy, Area Drug Task Force Officers and many other agencies are working together to battle the meth epidemic. Many communities are looking at new interventions and techniques to help support our meth addicted parents.

In 1999 the Iowa Department of Public Health was awarded a three-year grant by the Center of Substance Abuse Treatment. The Iowa Consortium for Substance Abuse Research and Evaluation conducted the evaluation component of the project. Data for the outcome measures in this report were obtained through interviews with recruited clients. Three outcomes were considered: 1)abstinence, 2) no arrests and 3) working full-time.

Six months after discharge from treatment: 71.2% of the clients remained abstinent, 90.04% had not been arrested, and 54.8% were working full-time. Results for clients who completed a second follow-up interview 12 months after leaving treatment: abstinence was reported by 75.4% of these clients, 95.7% had not been arrested in the previous six months and 66.7% were working full-time.

Those who were fortunate to receive treatment for more than 90 days were almost one and a third times more likely to be employed full-time. The results of this evaluation indicated that treatment is successful for the methamphetamine client and that those who are in treatment for more than 90 days are more likely to have successful outcomes.

Those who suffer from meth addiction need to hear the message of hope and that Iowa is supportive of the changes they are making. Families in crisis due to addiction suffer from shame, guilt, hopelessness and fear. However, once treated for their addiction, these same families can move forward and become valuable, respected members of their communities.

The Department of Human Services and the Crisis Center and Womens Center in Ottumwa are collaborating to start support groups for women called Moms off Meth in four areas of the State. Other counties are beginning to look into starting chapters in their communities. The focus of this group is empowerment through education and awareness. Women are getting together to help other women to develop new resources and alleviate barriers to their success.

Iowa is moving forward to close the gap between substance abusers, their families and the services they need to facilitate change. There are new treatment programs opening for women to take their children and the entire family is learning how to heal together. Treatment works. Families are reunited. Support Iowas families in their journey to recovery. Reach out and let them know that you care. There is hope for Iowas meth addicted families.

Judy Murphy is a Meth Specialist for the Iowa Department of Human Services and is the Cedar Rapids Service Area consultant to social workers that have meth cases on their caseload. She provides specific training to staff in all the counties and community partners in the service area, and is the founder of Moms Off Meth.