CONTRIBUTORS

Officer Abel Ramos
Officer Jenny Paddock
Chris Reynolds, City Prosecutor
Elizabeth Robinson, Homeless Navigator
Trends in Meth Use in CO
• Steady decline from 2005-2011
• Uptick in use begins in 2013
• By 2015, Colorado is at its highest level in recent years as measured by primary substance of abuse at admission for treatment
• Anecdotal data suggests meth use in CO has increased since 2015
CO Meth Use: 10th to 2nd in the U.S.

Treatment Admissions per 100,000; Methamphetamine 1° Substance


US CO
Confirmation that Meth Use Has Increased

- See links in “Sources” for newspaper articles documenting increase in highlighted cities

- CDPHE reports that fatal overdoses of meth increased from approximately 27 in 2010 to 196 in 2016
Jails:  
Arapahoe  
Denver x 2  
El Paso  
Larimer  
Mesa  
Pueblo

% of Homeless vs. Non-Homeless Inmates in 7 CO Jails  
Reporting Substance Use 30 Days Prior to Incarceration

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Substance</th>
<th>Homeless</th>
<th>Non-Homeless</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cannabis</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methamphetamine</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alcohol</td>
<td>36%</td>
<td>44%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amphetamine</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heroin</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crack Cocaine</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Attributes of Meth Use
How People use Meth
Behaviors of Meth Users

- Hallucinations – visual, auditory, other
- Delusions – often persecutory, paranoid
- Increased aggression – due to loss of ability to manage impulses, respond rationally
- Obsessive compulsive behaviors
- Agitation
- Risk-taking
Challenges: Meth & Homelessness
Impacts of Meth on Homeless Individuals

- BPD HOT officers estimate 80% of current homeless use meth vs. 15% five years ago; alcoholics now using meth
- Homeless individuals using meth are less willing to access help
  - They would rather stay on the street than use homeless services
  - Their addiction is stronger than their sense of self-preservation
- Increases in meth use by the severely mentally ill homeless has amplified their volatility
- Anecdotally, meth use may also be catalyzing seizures in homeless with pre-existing seizure disorders
Treatment for Meth Addiction

- Meth is highly addictive
  - Often ranked in top 5 substances for severity of addiction

- Most users are poly drug users
  - Treatment protocols may conflict

- Lack of available treatment
  - One indigent in-patient drug treatment bed at MHP
  - Ft. Lyon requires 30-day detox before admission

- No medical-assisted therapy
  - vs. Vivitrol, Methadone, etc. for Alcohol, Opioids
  - Needle exchange program not centrally located

- Recovery is longer than for other substances
  - Often accompanied by depression; brain function worsens during the initial months of treatment
Housing & Meth

- Many landlords will not rent to known meth users
- Meth is easily spread in multi-family housing units
- Meth contamination is expensive to remediate
Meth in Boulder
Source of Boulder Meth: Mexico (via Denver)

- Charts shows pounds of methamphetamine seized in the United States or at the border by U.S. Border Patrol and Office of Field Operations
- Seizures of Meth Increased 205% Between FY 2012 And FY 2017
- Current meth is more potent than meth cooked in the U.S. in the past
Meth: Cost, Availability, Desirability

- Readily available
- Less expensive than any other drug
- $10 will keep a person high all day
- 1 gram will last about 2 weeks
- Freely shared so often no cost to user
- A meth “high” increases dopamine levels in the brain significantly more than other recreational drugs (e.g., 4x higher than cocaine)
BPD Experience with Meth

- Automobile Trespass and Theft
- Bicycle Theft
- Violence/aggression towards others
- Obstructing/Resisting with police officers
- Influx of outsiders who are selling, using meth
- Citizen complaints about needles, encampments
- Drug Task Force is aware, involved
Dealing with the Challenges of Meth

- Continue regular cleanups of public spaces; consider sharps containers in parks
- Consider needle exchange via Street Medicine
- Develop meth-resistant housing, or meth mitigation fund
- Work with community partners to address treatment innovations, challenges
- Continue work by HOT officers & homeless navigator, with individual muni court defendants
Sources (1)

- https://www.denverpost.com/2018/09/10/colorado-opioide-epidemic-meth-comes-back/ (slide 5: Meth-related deaths are increasing)
- CO cities report an increase in meth use (Slide 5):
Sources (2)

- https://cdpsdocs.state.co.us/ors/docs/reports/2018_Jail_Homelessness_Study.pdf  (Slide 6)
- https://www.therecoveryvillage.com/meth-addiction/meth-psychosis/#gref  (Slide 8)
- https://billingsgazette.com/news/crime/the-challenges-and-importance-of-treating-meth-addiction/article_a420184b-6816-5a5f-84b9-e8a1bfe81c6e.html  (Slide 8, 10)