



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information:

Meghan Gutierrez, the Partnership (212) 973-3502 or
(646) 825-0525

Lydia Lenker, Office of the Governor (615) 741-3763

Web site: www.drugfree.org

***Tennessee First State in the Nation
to Host Education Program Targeting Meth***

***Health Initiative Seeks to Reduce Teen Meth Use;
New Effort Announced Today in Nashville***

NASHVILLE – March 30th – Tennessee today becomes the first state in America to host a state-wide education campaign to reduce meth use by teenagers. The program, created by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America[®], was announced by Tennessee Governor Phil Bredesen and Steve Pasierb, president and CEO of the Partnership at the second annual Tennessee Conference on Methamphetamine.

“Thousands of Tennesseans have fallen victim to this highly addictive drug, many of them teenagers,” said Gov. Bredesen. “This research-based initiative will help teenagers and parents better understand the health risks posed by methamphetamine, while also encouraging parents and other caregivers to talk with their children about the potentially lethal effects of this insidious drug.”

Nationally, some 1.9 million teenagers -- or one out of every 12 -- have experimented with methamphetamine.¹ This trend coupled with the availability of meth in Tennessee is of particular concern to campaign coordinators. Last year, Tennessee ranked third in the nation in number of meth labs discovered by law enforcement agencies – behind only Missouri and Iowa in meth lab incidents recorded in the United States.² This is one reason why Tennessee was selected for this health education effort, Pasierb said.

“The increasing availability of methamphetamine in Tennessee tells us that young people in this region are facing a serious health threat,” Pasierb explained. “Demand reduction efforts are a critical component to addressing this problem. We must do everything we can to educate parents and

¹ 2003 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study, conducted by Roper Public Affairs for The Partnership.

² The number of clandestine methamphetamine lab incidents in Tennessee increased to 1,259 in 2004 according to the Drug Enforcement Administration. Tennessee ranks third in the nation in meth lab incidents (2004), behind only Missouri (2,707) and Iowa (1,300). Additionally, the 2004 National Drug Threat Assessment from the U.S. Justice Department’s National Drug Intelligence Center identifies Tennessee as a primary methamphetamine market. The report cites high demand for the drug combined with a proliferation of small-capacity meth labs in the area.

communities around the state about the harmful effects of methamphetamine and inspire parents to communicate to their children the negative health consequences that can result from using meth.”

The Community Anti-Drug Coalitions Across Tennessee (CADCAT) and the Tennessee division of the Drug Enforcement Administration are supporting the effort, which will consist of an intense advertising and public relations efforts targeting parents and their teenagers. The campaign will use a series of hard-hitting, research-based anti-drug messages provided by the Partnership, supplemented by testimony from local pediatricians, who will serve as the primary spokespeople for the media effort. Campaign coordinators believe the voice of the medical community will resonate with parents. “Pediatricians are in a unique position to help close the gap between perception and reality about the health impacts of methamphetamine,” explained CADCAT Executive Director Pam White.

The campaign is an expansion of a first-of-its-kind methamphetamine education program created by the Partnership in 2003 and funded by the Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA). The Partnership launched the initiative in two pilot markets (Phoenix, Arizona and St. Louis, Missouri) in response to an increase in teen methamphetamine use. After just one year, campaign research showed that parents’ perception that even one-time use of methamphetamine is a health problem increased significantly. Research indicated positive attitude changes among in teenagers in both test markets as well.

The campaign is being funded by a grant from CHPA, the trade association representing U.S. manufacturers and distributors of over-the-counter medications and nutritional supplements. CHPA has been involved in combating methamphetamine abuse for many years, with a particular interest in ensuring that over-the-counter medicines are not diverted to manufacture the drug. “CHPA is pleased to be able to bring this successful program to Tennessee and continue our work with the Partnership. We need to focus attention on reducing the demand for this terrible drug through proven programs like this,” said CHPA President Linda Suydam, D.P.A.

Methamphetamine is an addictive stimulant. Often called “speed” or “crystal,” meth is a crystal-like, powdered substance that is sometimes produced in large rock-like chunks. The drug can be taken orally, injected, snorted or smoked. Once a threat largely in the American southwest, use of the drug has moved steadily eastward in recent years. Long-term use and high doses of methamphetamine can bring on full-blown toxic psychosis, often exhibited in violent and aggressive behavior.

For more information on the health risks of methamphetamine, or for tips on how to talk to kids about drugs, visit the Partnership’s Web site at www.drugfree.org. To get help for a child that may have a substance abuse problem, contact the Center for Substance Abuse Treatment’s National Drug and Alcohol Treatment Routing Service at (800) 662-4357 for referral to a treatment program near you.

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The Partnership for a Drug-Free America® is a private, non-profit coalition of professionals from the communications industry. Best known for its national, drug-education advertising campaign, the Partnership’s mission is to reduce illicit drug use in America. The Partnership’s State/City Alliance Program supports the Partnership’s mission at the local level. The Partnership receives major funding from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation and financial support from more than 200 private sector corporations. The Partnership accepts no money from alcohol or tobacco manufacturers. All actors in the Partnership’s ads appear pro bono through the generosity of the Screen Actors Guild and the American Federation of Television and Radio Artists.