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Executive Director, NAMSDL

From: Carnevale Associates, LLC

Subject: Recommendations for a Midwest/Great Lakes Regional Methamphetamine Strategy

The National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws (NAMSDL) is hosting a series of regional methamphetamine conferences. These conferences involve representatives from federal, state and local levels, and tribal governments who work together to generate regional priorities and recommendations about methamphetamine use and its consequences. Conference findings in turn influence methamphetamine policy at all levels of government.

This memorandum presents the findings from the Midwest/Great Lakes regional conference held in Des Moines, IA. All findings represent the input of focus groups that were held during the two-day conference, in addition to input solicited via survey by Carnevale Associates, LLC before and after the conference. States that participated in the conference are as follows: Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin. Tribal representatives from these states also asked to participate.

The 103 conference participants came from a broad range of careers with varying levels of experience. This experience and background diversity was key to developing a broad range of recommendations for addressing the methamphetamine problem. Participants included 1) local, county, and state law enforcement representatives, including the High Intensity Drug Trafficking Areas (HIDTA) Program; 2) single state agency authorities; 3) prevention professionals; 4) treatment experts; 5) city, county, and state government representatives drawn from social services, health care, corrections, and foster care; 6) state health departments; 7) state representatives; and 8) community coalition representatives. Over forty percent (40%) of conference participants have twenty or more years of experience in their respective fields. It is important to note that while several constituencies were involved, there were other drug and alcohol professionals who, because of scheduling and funding deficiencies, were unable to attend the conference. NAMSDL used on-line surveys to solicit their input.

**The Nature of the Methamphetamine Problem in the Midwest/Great Lakes Region:**

Conference participants rated the methamphetamine problem in their states as equally or more serious than other drug-related problems, such as alcohol abuse, other illicit drug abuse, and prescription drug abuse. A slight majority of participants (58%) also felt that their state's problem is just as serious as the Midwest/Great Lakes region, while a lesser percentage (40%) felt their state's problem is more serious. A smaller proportion (40%) felt the methamphetamine problem in their state is more serious than the nation as a whole.

The Midwest/Great Lakes region has had a methamphetamine problem for several years and has alleviated its effects through a variety of methods. This statement is evidenced by the fact that all (100%) surveyed conference respondents claimed that their state has laws regulating the control of precursor chemicals used to manufacture methamphetamine. Moreover, 88 percent felt that the problem of methamphetamine labs in their states has decreased over the past three years. Many individuals attribute this decrease to the implementation of the precursor laws.

**Strengths of the Midwest/Great Lakes Region:** The Midwest/Great Lakes region is somewhat developed in terms of their strengths for dealing with methamphetamine and its related issues. However, the degree of this development varies throughout the region. Since this was an information-sharing event, it was beneficial to assess what is working in states so those laws and policies could be replicated in other states if desired. The following is a list of defined regional strengths:

- Drug Courts (youth, adult, family treatment)
- Strong collaboration between law enforcement, treatment services, and prevention services
- Community coalitions
- Chemical precursor and drug-endangered children laws
- Methamphetamine lab awareness campaigns
- Community-based task forces and coalitions
- Multi-jurisdictional methamphetamine task forces
- Implementation of evidence-based treatment and prevention
- Drug-Endangered Children programs
- Meth awareness and education campaigns
- Tank locks and additives for anhydrous ammonia

**Action Items and Priorities of the Midwest/Great Lakes Region:** The action items and priorities developed by conference participants reflect the fact that the region already has effective programs to control the demand and supply of methamphetamine, including prevention, treatment, and law enforcement. However, these programs need to be improved, and the region would like to see more collaboration and coordination among programs both within states and throughout the region, particularly in the area of data collection. The region also has concerns in the areas of drug-endangered children and consistency of methamphetamine-related legislation. The most significant of the recommendations are as follows:

## **General Recommendations:**

- Coordinate statewide and regional drug policy
  - Have each state develop a cabinet-level drug policy office
  - Have each state develop a state drug policy coalition
- Increase access to evidence-based treatment
- Identify and develop specific sustainable funding sources earmarked for prevention, treatment, education, and law enforcement
- Develop a regional information, data, intelligence and services sharing entity
- Collect federal, state, local, and tribal data to identify illegal alien methamphetamine arrests
- Reinstate and stabilize funding for access to a continuum of evidence-based treatment, rehabilitation, and law enforcement
- Host a stakeholders meeting to build support for coalitions
- Enable regional discussion for planning purposes.
- Conduct an interdisciplinary conference on best practices to address meth issues in the region

Conference participants also offered specific national/federal recommendations:

- Conduct a needs assessment for funding decisions, technical assistance, and training
- Sponsor more federal research on the environmental impact of methamphetamine labs, the health consequences of methamphetamine abuse, and law enforcement strategies to reduce methamphetamine trafficking
- Continue federal funding for key grants such as BYRNE, the Substance Abuse Block Grant, Safe and Drug-Free Schools, etc.
- Target methamphetamine imported from Mexico
- Expand NAMSDL's role in providing training and technical assistance to states

## **Specific Recommendations for Drug-Endangered Children and Methamphetamine-Related Legislation:**

**Drug-Endangered Children:** Although drug-endangered children programs and laws exist in the majority of the states that participated in the conference, participants felt these programs need to be expanded and strengthened. Suggested methods to do so include:

- Expand protocols to encompass all children exposed to a Schedule I-III controlled dangerous substance
- Create a working group of service providers to develop and implement standard procedures, protocols, and policies for drug-endangered children
- Educate service providers on the use of procedures for dealing with drug-endangered children: Specifically, what their roles and responsibilities are with regard to those procedures
- Establish statewide drug-endangered children alliances
- Place a regional emphasis on drug-endangered children

**Methamphetamine-Related Legislation:** Conference participants emphasized the importance of methamphetamine-related legislation and the role it has played in alleviating the region's methamphetamine problem. Laws designed to protect the public from methamphetamine and its damaging consequences exist in all states in the Midwest/Great Lakes region. However, these laws are not consistent. Conference participants recommend that these laws be coordinated and become uniform, with NAMSDL facilitating this coordination. Other recommendations are as follows:

- Coordinate electronic monitoring of pseudoephedrine
- Reclassify methamphetamine precursors as Schedule V drugs across the region for consistency
- Establish multi-state coordination of prescription drug monitoring implementation to include pseudoephedrine
- Develop prescription drug monitoring program legislation in states that do not have them

**Tribal Priorities:** Although there was not a separate meeting for individuals representing Tribal Nations as there have been at previous conferences, they were present at the conference. Tribal nations were discussed in each of the working groups, with each developing tribal priorities. The primary focus of the priorities was building sustained relationships and partnerships with tribal nations, in addition to funding. Identified priorities are as follows:

- Build sustainable relationships and team mentality between state and local agencies and tribal authorities
- Encourage dialogue between tribal entities and law enforcement to identify and address drug enforcement, prevention, and treatment issues
- Identify and invite tribal leaders to participate in the Midwest Regional Conference to address specific methamphetamine and other drug related issues affecting communities
- Establish ongoing funding for tribal drug courts
- Establish federal funding for tribal methamphetamine projects with the same accessibility to funds currently available to states.

**Action Items to Support the National Methamphetamine Strategy:** The Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) leads the nation’s efforts to develop a national drug control policy. Each year, ONDCP prepares a report on the national drug problem and recommends policies, programs, and a federal budget to address the drug problem. Conference participants were asked for their recommendations on how federal policy might better address the nation’s methamphetamine problem as well as strengthen their regions’ capacity. Conference participants’ recommendations are highlighted in this section.

Overall, there is a consensus that methamphetamine is a local problem. However, national support and cooperation are vital in order to develop an effective response. Participants agreed that a comprehensive methamphetamine strategy must involve law enforcement, treatment, and, to an even greater extent prevention and education, with all levels of government communicating and reaching out to the public. Sustained funding in all these domains is imperative, with emphasis placed on the creation of state drug control policy offices to coordinate these efforts. Participants also suggest that the government needs to work diplomatically to stop the flow of methamphetamine from Mexico. Other specific recommendations include:

- Standardize precursor laws and policies
- Make pseudoephedrine a Schedule V drug
- Develop a regional data collection site/clearinghouse
- Implement more public education/awareness campaigns about methamphetamine and its damaging consequences
- Support sustained funding for existing drug courts and the implementation of new courts

**Summary:** The Midwest/Great Lakes regional conference held in Des Moines, Iowa convened many experts whose diverse backgrounds and experiences were key in developing a viable and effective regional methamphetamine strategy. The region has had problems with

methamphetamine for several years, and conference participants rated the methamphetamine problem in their states as equally or more serious than other drug-related problems, such as alcohol abuse, other illicit drug abuse, and prescription drug abuse. However, less than half (40%) of participants felt the methamphetamine problem in their states is more serious than the nation as a whole. All participants indicate that they have laws related to chemical precursors, and the success of these laws may contribute to the perception that the problem of methamphetamine labs has decreased over the past three years. Although the region has developed effective programs to combat methamphetamine and its damaging consequences, efforts need to be coordinated throughout the region. Key subject-specific recommendations include: 1) promote regionalized data collection; 2) strengthen existing drug-endangered children programs; and 3) coordinate methamphetamine-related legislation so laws are consistent throughout the region.