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From: Carnevale Associates, LLC

Subject: Recommendations for a South/Southeast Regional Methamphetamine Strategy

The National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws (NAMSDL) is holding a series of regional methamphetamine conferences with states, counties or other localities, and tribal governments. These conferences are generating “regional findings” about methamphetamine use and its consequences which, in turn, generated ideas for both local and national approaches.

This memorandum presents the findings from the regional conference held in Birmingham, Alabama. The findings reflect input from focus groups held during the two-day conference and as well as information obtained by Carnevale Associates, LLC in advance of and subsequent to the conference.

Conference participants represented a wide spectrum of disciplines and experience. This diversity of expertise resulted in 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 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) tribal nations; 7) state health departments; 8) state representatives; and 9) advocacy groups, such as *Mothers Against Methamphetamine*. It is important to also 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 its on-line surveys to solicit their input.

**Overall Findings about the Region’s Methamphetamine Problem:** Conference participants stated that the methamphetamine problem was equally or more serious than alcohol, tobacco, other drug use in their region, including prescription drug abuse. They also rated the seriousness of their regional problem as equal to that facing the nation as a whole.

With regard to the specific issues of methamphetamine labs and sources of methamphetamine supply, participants viewed their problems as differing from the national trend. National data suggest that local small labs are on the decline—perhaps because of tough state laws regulating precursors used to manufacture methamphetamine. About half of

the conference participants felt that the national trend matched the trend in their region, but the other half saw the problems of methamphetamine labs as increasing.

**Action Items to Support a Regional Methamphetamine Strategy:** A comprehensive, balanced local or regional drug control strategy includes program activities to reduce both the demand and supply of drugs, including prevention/education programs, treatment and aftercare, and law enforcement. The conference generated a number of general suggestions for improving the region's programs as well as specific recommendations for treatment, prevention, and law enforcement activities. The most significant of the recommendations include the following:

General Recommendations:

- Develop a regional plan to leverage resources used for activities such as training and technical assistance and information sharing;
- Establish a regional methamphetamine law enforcement task force;
- Establish a state-level entity to coordinate all methamphetamine-related demand reduction and law enforcement activities;
- Encourage the National Alliance for Model State Drug laws to promote consistency in state laws and regulations across the region;
- Establish regionalized data collection and information sharing;
- Expand and strengthen the drug-endangered children program;
- Expand funding for the “three legged stool” (law enforcement, treatment, and prevention) to support a comprehensive anti-methamphetamine strategy on tribal lands;
- Require local demand reduction programs to adopt evidence-based practices;
- Develop a public awareness campaign; and
- Conduct local research to demonstrate the cost savings associated with methamphetamine demand reduction and supply reduction activities.

Conference participants also offered specific national/federal recommendations:

- Ensure continued federal funding for key grants such as BYRNE, the Substance Abuse Treatment and Prevention Block Grant, Safe and Drug Free Schools, and treatment and prevention programs targeting methamphetamine problems, particularly those in the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration;

- Fund treatment, prevention, and law enforcement to directly support the needs of Tribal Communities;
- Develop national standards for the decontamination of methamphetamine sites;
- Improve coordination and collaboration by state, local, county, and federal law enforcement with tribal law enforcement; and
- Conduct more federal research on the environmental impact of methamphetamine labs, the health consequences of methamphetamine abuse, and law enforcement strategies to reduce methamphetamine trafficking.

#### Specific Recommendations for Prevention, Treatment, and Law Enforcement:

- Prevention: Conference participants emphasized the importance of educating individuals about the signs and consequences of methamphetamine use and the dangers posed by methamphetamine labs in their communities. Considerable focus was placed on targeting youth via school-based programs and on reaching adults through the business community. There was also interest in using public awareness campaigns to reach adults in the workplace, individuals in the media (newspapers, radios, television, sporting events, etc.) and elected officials.

Conference participants also offered ideas related to building a more permanent program infrastructure to address methamphetamine use and manufacture. They looked to the National Alliance on Model State Drug Laws to help them standardize state precursor laws in their region. They called for the adoption of the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's (SAMHSA) Strategic Prevention Framework, which is designed to bring a needs-based approach to evidence-based prevention programming.

There was also interest in having each state's single state authority (which administers the SAMHSA's substance abuse block grant) more involved in leading state-wide coordination of policy and programs. To support this infrastructure building, conference participants wanted more training and technical assistance, better tools to effectively share information, and the formation of more local community anti-drug coalitions.

- Treatment: There was tremendous interest expressed by conference participants in expanding and improving the ability of the treatment system to successfully treat methamphetamine addicts. Much of this interest was motivated by the recognition that methamphetamine users tend to have children who are endangered by exposure to methamphetamine labs and other forms of abuse from neglectful parents or caretakers. The most common specific recommendation related to this issue was for more aggressive approaches to remove drug endangered children from homes when documented cases of abuse become known to authorities.

To make treatment more effective in treatment methamphetamine addicts, conference participants focused on the need for more education of clinicians on effective screening, assessment, and treatment strategies. The criminal justice system was recognized as a major resource for treatment. Recommendations included the promotion of more recovery programs in jails and prisons, community-based recovery houses, greater use of drug courts, and court-ordered education classes for first-time offenders.

As was the case with prevention, there was interest in expanding the role of single state authorities to help coordinate policy and programs. This expanded role was to target access to treatment, improved treatment protocols, the use of best practices, and the identification of funding sources to expand treatment services.

- **Law Enforcement:** Much of the focus on law enforcement was on improving investigatory and interoperability capacity to address the problem of methamphetamine labs and dealing. Specific recommendations included the use of multi-jurisdiction task forces to target methamphetamine labs and dealers, more training of law enforcement officers in interdiction techniques, particularly about how best to minimize personal exposure to the health and environmental dangers posed by methamphetamine labs, and the purchase of methamphetamine lab vehicles to assist with clandestine lab investigations.

There was widespread concern about declining federal funding for law enforcement programs such as the Byrne Grant/JAG program, which are credited with improved local law enforcement efforts. Conference participants recommended that the federal government at least sustain funding for these programs.

Conference participants also recommended stronger penalties related to methamphetamine manufacture, improvements in drug court programs to address unique needs of individuals addicted to methamphetamine; stronger and uniform penalties across states for methamphetamine labs, and data systems to electronically track cold medicine and veterinary medicine purchases containing pseudoephedrine.

To improve performance accountability within the law enforcement community, it was recommended that multi-level government efforts to confront methamphetamine related crime employ ComStat-type systems similar to the one introduced in New York City in the past decade. ComStat systems have been recognized and credited with helping local law enforcement become more responsive to emerging threats and in reducing crime.

**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.

In general, there was an understanding that the methamphetamine problem will be solved at the local level, but that national support and leadership are essential to make the local response more effective and lasting. Participants emphasized the need for a balanced approach that involves the combined efforts of law enforcement, prevention, and treatment specialists within the community to address methamphetamine use, dealing, and manufacture. Some specific recommendations include:

- Greater national leadership—some participants mentioned a greater role for the National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws—to promote specific laws related to precursor chemicals, drug endangered children and penalties for drug dealing more uniform and consistent across the nation.
- Options to improve communication within the law enforcement community and between law enforcement and social service providers, especially with regards to issues related to drug endangered children.
- More stringent laws regarding importation, manufacture, and distribution of methamphetamine throughout the nation.
- Specific, consistent laws relating to drug endangered children among states.

In the area of prevention, conference participants recommended more emphasis on building local community coalitions that involve leaders from law enforcement, treatment, prevention, and others such as those in education and industry. The federal government was viewed as being responsible for providing knowledge of best practices, technical assistance, standard setting, and funding of local efforts to help states build the prevention infrastructure needed to confront methamphetamine and other emerging drug problems.

Similar views were expressed about treatment. Recommendations included more federal funding for treatment services to treat methamphetamine users, particularly SAMHSA's substance abuse block grant. This grant was viewed by some participants as the cornerstone of the public treatment system and the principal means to treat most methamphetamine addicts.

Law enforcement recommendations focused on continued support for federal grants (Byrne/JAG), which were viewed as essential to improved coordination of local law enforcement efforts. There was also interest in more centralized data collection to learn more about the nature and extent of the methamphetamine problem and interest in national precursor chemical control at the national level. A few participants also emphasized more border control to reduce availability.

Finally, there was interest in having more research on best practices in law enforcement and demand reduction to control the methamphetamine problem. This included research to better understand methamphetamine's effects on the individual, drug endangered children, options for improved and effective clean-up of lab sites, and treatment and prevention strategies to address the heart of the methamphetamine problem—methamphetamine demand.

**Conclusion:** The regional conference held in Birmingham, Alabama drew together a diverse group of experts who generated a wide range of findings and recommendations for developing an effective South/Southeast Regional Methamphetamine Strategy. Conference participants stated that, from a regional viewpoint, the methamphetamine problem was equally or more serious than alcohol, tobacco, other drug use, including prescription drug abuse. Many participants are looking to the National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws for a greater role in leadership—to make specific laws related to precursor chemicals, drug endangered children and penalties for drug dealing more uniform and consistent across the nation. Key subject-specific recommendations included: 1) a need for building a more permanent program infrastructure; 2) an expansion and improvement of the ability of the treatment system to successfully treat methamphetamine addicts; and 3) the improvement of law enforcement’s investigatory and interoperability capacity to address the problem of methamphetamine labs and dealing.