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Executive Director, NAMSDL

From: Carnevale Associates, LLC

Subject: Recommendations for a West/Southwest Regional Methamphetamine Strategy

The National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws (NAMSDL) is currently hosting a series of four 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 West/Southwest regional conference held in Salt Lake City, Utah. 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: Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oklahoma, Oregon, Texas, Utah, Washington, and Wyoming. Tribal representatives from these states also participated.

The 138 conference participants came from a broad range of careers with varying levels of experience. This experience and background diversity was key in 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) tribal nations; 7) state health departments; 8) state representatives; and 9) community coalition representatives. Over 40 percent 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 West/Southwest 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 (56%) also feel that their state's problem is just as serious as the West/Southwest region, while a lesser percentage (41%) feel their state's problem is more serious. However, a stronger majority (59%) feel the methamphetamine problem in their state is more serious than the nation as a whole.

Research shows that the West/Southwest region has had a problem with methamphetamine longer than the rest of the nation. This statement is evidenced by the fact that 86% of surveyed conference respondents claim that their state has laws regulating the control of precursor chemicals used to manufacture methamphetamine. Moreover, 70 percent of surveyed participants also feel that the problem of methamphetamine labs in their states have decreased over the past three years. Many individuals perceive this decrease is due to the implementation of the precursor laws.

Strengths of the West/Southwest Region: The West/Southwest region is quite 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, clean up, remediation, and drug-endangered children laws
- Epidemiological workgroups
- Methamphetamine lab awareness campaigns
- Community-based task forces and coalitions
- Multi-jurisdictional methamphetamine task forces
- Collaboration and communication between all levels of government (state, county community)
- Treatment funding increases earmarked for methamphetamine services

Action Items and Priorities of the West/Southwest Region: The action items and priorities developed by conference participants reflect the fact that methamphetamine strategies have already been in place for quite some time. The region already has programs in place to control the demand and supply of methamphetamine, including prevention, treatment, and law enforcement. However, the region would like to see more collaboration and coordination among these programs, has great concerns about how to appropriately allocate and sustain funding, and feel that methamphetamine legislation could be refined and made more consistent. The most significant of the recommendations are as follows:

General Recommendations:

- Establish a regular regional meeting to include all states in the region
- Develop a task force of key regional stakeholders to advance priorities identified at regional meetings
- Establish regionalized data collection
- Create and implement a regional plan to stop meth trafficking from Mexico and Canada
- Implement specialized, coordinated interdiction of highways
- Create a regional plan to address youth substance abuse and suicide prevention
- Include mandatory engagement of public health officials in local processes for decision making and problem solving
- Ask national and state representatives to quantify the public impact of meth use
- Support coalitions and task forces in all jurisdictions

Conference participants also offered specific national/federal recommendations:

- Get more accurate and timely data reporting at both the state and local levels
- Provide additional funding for methamphetamine lab clean up and remediation training for all levels of government
- Encourage up front sharing of state legislative issues with federal agencies.
- Have a meeting with tribal nations to assess what technical assistance is needed
- Establish a tribal nation HIDTA
- 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
- Involve federal agencies such as the Drug Enforcement Administration, Attorneys General, U.S. Attorney's offices, tribal authorities, Bureau of Indian Affairs, and Border Patrol

Specific Recommendations for Funding and Methamphetamine-Related Legislation:

Funding:

All levels of government represented at the conference (federal/state/county/tribal) stated that addressing funding issues is a top priority for the West/Southwest region. Participants recognize there is an urgent need for sustained funding to control methamphetamine supply and demand, as well as newly formed task forces and coalitions. The group also feels that the current funding allocation process needs to be changed. There is too much competition with the current grant allocation process and eliminating the competitive nature of grants will improve coordination and collaboration efforts. For example, an identified action step is to divert federal funding into block grants as opposed to silo/discretionary funding, which would allow for more control at the state level to determine needs. It was further recommended that the region adopt a “law enforcement model” which limits the number of grants and focus on the areas of greatest need. Likewise, a top federal priority identified during the conference involves each state performing a statewide comprehensive assessment of needs and federal, state, local, and tribal funding, providing information about where funding goes, then setting realistic priority for programs based on this needs assessment.

In addition to changing the grant allocation process, conference participants also gave the following funding-related recommendations:

- Educate legislators in the region of the importance of drug courts and the need to continue these programs with stable funding
- Develop a regional plan to leverage resources used for things such as training and technical assistance and information sharing
- Reduce demand for methamphetamine through consistent and adequate funding for effective prevention strategies
- Fund and actively support coalitions and alliance building and operation for problem solving
- Continue funding for key grants such as BYRNE, the Substance Abuse Block Grant, and Safe and Drug-Free Schools

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. As mentioned earlier, the vast majority of participants indicate that they have chemical precursor laws in their states. States also indicate that they have had much success with laws related to methamphetamine clean up, remediation, and protecting drug-endangered children. Although laws designed to protect the public from methamphetamine and its damaging consequences exist in all states in the West/Southwest region, these laws are not consistent. Conference participants recommend that these laws be coordinated and become uniform, with NAMSDL facilitating this coordination. The group also expressed a desire to coordinate with the Canadian Provincial

Government, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, and Health Canada for precursor enforcement. Further, participants recommend reconciling state and federal rules to develop a standardized training program for retailers and pharmacists, educating the public to support law enforcement activities that may result in reduced demand, and coordinating federal and state legislative initiatives.

Tribal Nations Planning Meeting: Although representatives from Tribal Nations were present in the state working groups, a separate planning meeting was held for these individuals the day before the conference. This meeting focused on identifying priorities in three areas: methamphetamine-related problems facing Tribal Nations, opportunities for tribal-state collaboration, and issues requiring federal assistance.

Areas identified as **methamphetamine-related problems** in Tribal Nations include the following:

- Wrap-around services (aftercare/re-entry/transition/support) do not exist in many areas
- No treatment on demand/ Inadequate number of treatment beds
- Lack of incarceration has led to a “free for all” among juveniles and adults
- Many education concerns such as high drop out rates
- There are very little accurate data
- Problem with an increasing number of suicides
- Dramatic increase in violent crime on reservations

Tribal-state Collaboration: Meeting participants stated that there is a partnership with Oklahoma via a Bureau of Justice Assistance grant. The grant includes a multi-jurisdictional task force and focuses on treatment and mental health.

Some issues identified as **needing federal assistance** included the following:

- Most tribes do not have information technology
 - If tribes do have information technology, they do not have sustained funding or administrators
 - Meeting participants recommended asking the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) for a grant to overcome this issue
- Lack of juvenile detention facilities
 - The BIA closed all juvenile detention facilities nationwide, so beds must be bought privately

- There has been inadequate support from BIA in terms of funding with this issue
- There is very little assistance available concerning grant awareness and the application process
 - Tribes are looking for help from NAMSDL on this issue

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 agree 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 collaborative groups, such as regional task forces. Participants also suggest that methamphetamine should be thought of as a health issue first, and a law enforcement issue second. Other specific recommendations include:

- Focus on evidence-based programs and best practices, particularly with prevention programs
- Introduce tougher laws and sentencing for methamphetamine-related offenses
- Implement more public education/awareness campaigns about methamphetamine and its damaging consequences
- Promote and formalize use of drug courts and family courts
- Explore the link between illegal immigration from Mexico and drug smuggling

Summary: The West/Southwest regional conference held in Salt Lake City, Utah 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 quite some time, 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. Also a majority feel the methamphetamine problem in their states is more serious than the nation as a whole. Most 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. This region is further along than the rest of the nation in terms of methamphetamine-related programs and infrastructure. However, there are many areas that need refinement. Key subject-specific recommendations include: 1) promote more collaboration and coordination among existing programs, task forces, and coalitions in the region; 2) ensure that funding is sustained and allocated appropriately to the areas with greatest need; and 3) coordinate methamphetamine-related legislation so laws are consistent throughout the region.