



# Preventing Child Abuse...We Can **SUCCEED**



# The Effects of Methamphetamine on Children

## LIVING IN DANGER

### HOW YOU CAN HELP

If you have contact with a child that you believe may have been exposed to a meth lab, or that you believe may have been abused or neglected, you should inform local law enforcement and call the DCFS child abuse hotline.

#### How to report abuse to DCFS

- Call the DCFS hotline at 1-800-25ABUSE (1-800-252-2873).
- Have the following information, if possible:
 

Name	Date of birth
Address	Phone number
Information about siblings	Parent/guardian's name
- Identify if you are a mandated reporter.
- State if you think it is an emergency.
- State why you have reason to believe the child is abused and/or neglected (report factual information and observations).
- Document the name of the hotline worker and the date and time of your call.
- If you are a mandated reporter, complete the DCFS report form. This form must be sent to the local DCFS Investigative Unit. (Keep a copy for your records).
- Your name is not given to those being investigated. Laws protect confidentiality of mandated reporters.

### REAL KIDS – REAL FEAR

Donnie's mother was a meth addict. He said he never knew when she'd be back, where his next meal would come from, or even where he'd live the next day. He was scared all the time.

Jessica was afraid of her mother. She said her mother would go into paranoid rages when coming down off drugs. Jessica says her mother hit her in the face, drug her by the hair and slapped her on the back.

Michael said he found used needles, handguns, and drugs lying around the house. He was terrified of the drugged-out strangers who were constantly in and out of his home.

### PREVENTING CHILD ABUSE... WE CAN SUCCEED!

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**Prevent Child Abuse America**  
1-800-CHILDREN



# HOW ARE CHILDREN IN DANGER?



# METHAMPHETAMINE USE DOES AFFECT CHILDREN!

## THE FACTS

Methamphetamine, or “meth,” is the number one drug problem in rural America and is quickly spreading to urban areas.

### *What is methamphetamine?*

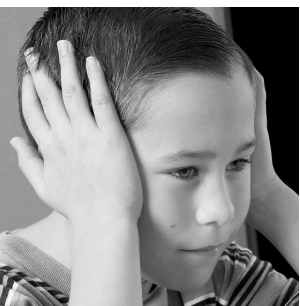
Methamphetamine is a powerful stimulant that affects the central nervous system and is:

- Highly addictive
- Easily manufactured from inexpensive household substances
- Ingested by smoking, snorting, injecting or swallowing
- Quick acting—effects can begin within 2 – 5 minutes
- Long lasting—effects can last 6 – 24 hours
- Mood altering—periods of confusion, known as “tweaking,” can last 24 – 36 hours

Meth is being manufactured or “cooked” in small home-based laboratories. These makeshift labs are usually found in locations accessible to children like the bedroom, garage or kitchen. The chemicals used to manufacture meth are highly toxic, flammable and explosive.

## HOW ARE CHILDREN IN DANGER

A child may inhale or swallow toxic substances or inhale the secondhand smoke of adults who are using meth. Children also absorb meth and other toxic substances through their skin following contact with contaminated surfaces, clothing or food.



Children who are exposed to the chemicals used to manufacture meth may experience:

- Irritation of the eyes, skin or mucus membranes
- Respiratory difficulties, ranging from wheezing to respiratory distress
- Chemical burns on the skin
- Unusual odor and may appear unclean
- Dizziness, nausea and fatigue

Among other threats, children in meth homes face the dangers of:

- Chemical contamination
- Fires and explosions
- Guns, explosives and booby traps
- Abuse and neglect
- Sexual abuse
- Accidental skin prick from discarded needles or other drug paraphernalia
- Dangerous living conditions
- Social and emotional problems

### *Laws impacting the issue:*

Two Illinois laws became effective in 2004 pertaining to child endangerment and the production of methamphetamine:

- The first law creates the criminal offense of drug-related child endangerment. This crime is committed when a person knowingly exposes a child to a clandestine laboratory environment. Aggravated drug-related child endangerment occurs when the lab causes death, great bodily harm, disability or disfigurement to the child.
- The second law restricts the sale of some chemicals used in the production of methamphetamine along with increased sentences for persons convicted of manufacturing the drug.

## MAKING THE CONNECTION

It is not uncommon to find meth homes that lack heating, cooling or running water. They may be infested with rodents and insects such as cockroaches, fleas and lice. Parents and caretakers who are using meth frequently fail to protect the children’s safety and fail to provide for basic needs such as food, hygiene, dental and medical care, and appropriate sleeping conditions. Meth using adults often become irritable, careless and violent.

Children exposed to environments where meth is used or manufactured may show some of the following signs or symptoms:

- Wary of adult contact
- Frightened of parents
- Behavioral extremes; aggressiveness or withdrawal
- Reluctance to go home
- Begging or stealing food
- Poor hygiene
- Inappropriate dress
- Unattended physical or medical needs
- Excessive fatigue
- Difficulty walking or sitting
- Poor peer relationships
- Developmental delays
- Infantile behavior by older children
- Takes on the parenting or caretaker role in the family
- Extended stays at school; early arrival and late departure
- Sudden changes in behavior or school performance
- Child reports incidents of injury or neglect

