

The Social Construction of an Epidemic:
The Meth Problem in Rural Arkansas

Co-presented by:
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Restatement of the problem

Methamphetamine use has been on the increase for the decade and has reached epidemic proportions. This paper seeks to investigate the claims surrounding the meth epidemic and how that translates into law enforcement action against meth use and distribution. Media claims about the danger inherent in methamphetamine use will be compared to data obtained from local prosecuting attorneys to get a broader understanding of meth epidemic as well as the ability of local prosecutors to fight this epidemic as well as the constraints they are faced with in their battle against the meth epidemic.

Purpose/Objectives

To share information at the national, professional level obtained from local community/university research through the River Valley Meth Project. Specific focus is given to community attitudes regarding drugs and the construction of drug use in community as a problem. In light of high estimates of meth use by adults in the area, it is important to share information at a broader level.

Significance/Need

Professional enhancement. Application was made to the Southern Sociological Society to present findings of current research based on survey data collected by the River Valley Meth Project. These research results are to be presented by Dr. Sean Huss (PI) and Dr. Dennis Williams (co-author) for professional enhancement purposes.

Process for Attainment of Objective/Goals

The event was held at the Southern Sociological Society Conference, April 1-4, 2008 in New Orleans, LA at the Hotel Monteleone. Presentation date and time was Friday, April 3 at 8:00-9:20 A.M. Two faculty members traveled together to the conference site. We departed on March 31st and returned on April 5th.

Dissemination of Results

The paper was presented in the Rural Crime session on April 3, 2009. The co-authors distributed contact information at the site and eventual publication in a national sociological journal will be sought.

Budget

Funds will be used for registration fees, meals and lodging for Sean Huss and Dennis Williams. Mileage costs have been included in this budget. The following costs are expected:

<u>Expenditure</u>	<u>Details</u>	<u>Total</u>
Registration fees:	60.00 x 2	120.00
Lodging:	125.00 x 2 x 5 nights	1,250.00
Meals:	32.20/day x 2 x 5 days	322.00
Mileage:	2056 roundtrip mileage	884.08
Grand Total		2,556.08

Conclusion

The construction of the meth epidemic is changing, becoming broader in scope, and focusing less on meth, and more on prevention of drug use in general.