



Final Seed Grant to the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley
METHAMPHETAMINE RECOVERY PROJECT

The Methamphetamine Recovery Project (Project) focused on development of comprehensive methamphetamine education, treatment and recovery programs throughout the San Joaquin Valley. The goal, objective, strategies, and outcomes were formulated in a collaborative effort between the Central California Social Welfare Evaluation, Research and Training Center (SWERT) and the Central California Area Social Services Consortium. The Project was further defined in an application for seed grant funding submitted by the SWERT Center and approved by the Partnership Board.

As the Project evolved, it was apparent that the most effective means for achieving the goal would be to engage communities in grass-roots conversations about what types of programs should be included in a comprehensive approach. **Local solutions to regional issues** became the guiding theme for a process that sought out, respected, and represented the voices of individuals and communities.

A Methamphetamine Recovery Project Advisory Council (Advisory Council), consisting of representatives recruited from all eight Valley counties, served as a collaborative oversight body for Project activities. The Council also served as a representative cross-section of community sectors. Its role was twofold:

- To serve as a collective voice for the San Joaquin Valley region for describing the Valley's needs
- To represent the Project in their own communities, sharing information about its purpose, its activities, and expected results

Two simultaneous strategies shaped and informed the Project's activities and results:

- Development of a process whereby the voices of Valley residents could be heard and their views could be used to define priorities for this complex issue.
- Outreach and engagement to solicit participation across the spectrum of public and private domains, including affected individuals and families.

The first step was to engage communities by:

- Involving stakeholders in improving situations that affect them.
- Facilitating social interaction that enabled affected individuals and groups to enter into dialogue, negotiation, learning, decision making and collective action.
- Encourage county government personnel, service providers, and community representatives to think and work together.

The result was more than 750 residents across the eight counties convening during the summer and fall of 2008, and more than 4,000 responses to questions about what works, what doesn't work, and what's needed in their communities. A Legislative Forum on March 7, 2008, at the University of the Pacific in Stockton, Calif., offered an opportunity for local, state, and federal legislators and policy-makers to participate in an open discussion and hear from individuals and family members about addiction, treatment, and recovery in the San Joaquin Valley.

*Local Solutions to Regional Issues: A Report From The Methamphetamine Recovery Project*¹ is the final report of the Project strategies and activities, a compilation of information, both data-driven and community-informed, about the impact of methamphetamine in the San Joaquin Valley. The report describes community-specific solutions already in place and perceptions about types of programs, legislation, and policies needed to support a comprehensive approach to complex issues. The Project report was endorsed at an Advisory Council meeting on December 5, 2008.

Accomplishments

To the extent that funding, county-level participation and other resources allowed, the Project was able to accomplish the following:

1. Developed a regional forum to discuss the effects of methamphetamine and other substance abuse in the San Joaquin Valley.
2. Established a regional Advisory Council to guide Project leadership and identify strategies for collecting community input.
3. Hosted venues across the region to assist in identifying and quantifying consensus about needs and issues in the Valley.
4. Established regional consensus about significant issues related to methamphetamine and other forms of substance abuse.
5. Collected, analyzed and reported public perceptions and opinions about models of care most likely to be effective for Valley residents.
6. Identified examples of community-specific strategies, programs, service sites and populations to be addressed.
7. Aggregated available local, state and national data about the impact of methamphetamine and other substances on Valley communities.
8. Completed a written plan featuring local solutions to regional issues.
9. Identified existing initiatives and assessed opportunities for expanding and enhancing support for local efforts.
10. Identified priorities for resource investment in a continuum of care.

Limitations

Certain planned activities could not be accomplished due to the level of funding ultimately available for the Project. They include:

1. Establishment of sustainable support for a regional resource, e.g. the Advisory Council, that would extend beyond the life of the Project as a resource for local, state and federal efforts to reduce the use and impact of methamphetamine and other substances.
2. Development of a comprehensive, strategic plan for a regional model for managing the methamphetamine epidemic.
3. Identification of technical resources needed to support longitudinal tracking of treatment outcomes and the subsequent impact on public services.
4. Review of potential prevention and treatment costs, specifically in the San Joaquin Valley, compared to long-term costs of failure to adequately address the issues.

¹ http://www.sjvpartnership.org/uploaded_files/WG_doc/MethReport_Final_Dec08.pdf

The data collected during Community Meetings reflected limitations of the approach:

- Recruitment of participants was compromised by not having an anchor in communities to partner with and attract meeting participants, especially in rural communities.
- The number of representatives from each grouping was disproportional, specifically limiting the voices of the business community and law enforcement.
- In the context of current population statistics, minority populations were under-represented. Too few community meetings were hosted for non-English-speaking residents, compared to English-only meetings.
- Requiring written responses may have discouraged individuals with low literacy skills.

Conclusion

The Methamphetamine Recovery Project accomplishments can and should serve as the first phase of an ongoing effort to reduce the impact of methamphetamine and other forms of substance abuse on the well-being of the San Joaquin Valley. The final report provides evidence of regional consensus about needs and resources if the Valley is to confront and reduce the effects of methamphetamine and other substances.