

HERMAN GOLDSTEIN AWARD APPLICATION

SUBMITTED BY:

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Casper Wyoming Police Department

SUMMARY:

During 2003, the City of Casper, Wyoming experienced five homicides. All 5 homicides were directly related to methamphetamine. An analysis of crime reports for the first half of 2003 found that between fifty to seventy percent of all crimes reported to the Casper Police Department had a meth nexus. Based on these statistics and events, several community leaders were invited to a meeting to address the rising tide of meth problems in the Casper area.

Based upon the experiences of the Chief of Police, Thomas Pagel, a community wide approach towards the meth problem was initiated. Chief Pagel understood that Law Enforcement alone could not solve the meth problem that was plaguing Casper and the surrounding areas. Among those that were invited to the initial meeting were; Wyoming Medical Center, Natrona County School District, Natrona County Sheriffs Office, District Attorney, City of Casper Council Members, Casper Police Department and the Casper Chamber of Commerce. Other business entities were later invited to join what became the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee.

The Casper Community Meth Watch Committee decided the first step would be to educate the public concerning the dangers of meth. This was accomplished by interviews with the local media as well as the start of numerous presentations to organizations within the Casper area. The Casper Community Meth Watch Committee then decided a conference needed to be held to educate not only the professionals within the Casper area but the State of Wyoming. In January of 2004, the first Meth Awareness Conference was held. The conference consisted of local and national speakers. Over 600 people attended the two day conference and over 600 attended the free public session.

As a further way to educate the public and specifically local businesses, the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee hosted a drug testing luncheon. This meeting was well attended with over 40 local businesses participating and learning about drug testing for businesses.

The next step for the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee was hosting a town hall meeting concerning meth and the impact on the community.

Towards the end of 2004, a legislative agenda was developed. In January of 2004 members of the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee made a presentation to the members of the Wyoming House and Senate. Members of the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee also testified on behalf of three bills that dealt with meth. Of the three bills, two passed and became law and the third was defeated on the House Floor.

2005 saw two more homicides directly related to meth. Crime in the Casper area continued to be driven by meth with fifty to seventy percent of crimes being reported to the Detective Unit having a meth nexus.

Educational efforts continued with the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee holding Meth Awareness Conferences in both 2005 and 2006. Attendance at the 2006 conference was over 700 people.

The drug testing for businesses has taken off with over 170 businesses now drug testing here in the Casper area. The Casper Community Meth Watch Committee hosted two more drug testing luncheons, one in 2005 and the last one in May of 2006.

Talks to various groups within the State of Wyoming have reached over 4000 people and over 120 groups. The Casper Community Meth Watch Committee has also given presentations to and assisted with setting up of Meth Watch Committees in other cities in Wyoming.

In 2005, funds were obtained from a foundation to complete a strategic plan for Casper on how to deal with meth. Once the consultants completed the strategic plan, over 80 recommendations were made. Key among those recommendations was the establishment of a Casper Plan that would assist Casper in developing a unified strategy for dealing with meth.

In January of 2006, a Citizens Facilitation Initiative was launched. The purpose of the Citizens Facilitation Initiative was to get input from recognized experts in the field as well as from the citizens of Casper and the surrounding area. A group of citizens representing the community was selected and then tasked with developing a community based strategy. The group held hearings over a span of 5 weeks. Once the hearings were completed, a set of critical action steps and long term strategies were developed.

The Mayors of the local cities and towns, the CEO of the Hospital, the Superintendent of the School District, the Casper City Manager, Editor of the Paper and the Chief of Police were chosen to be the Implementation Committee. Their task was to take the Casper Specific plan and assign the critical action steps to sub-committee. Once the sub-committees have completed their work, they will submit their report to the Implementation Committee for final action. The members of the Implementation Committee were chosen as they are the individuals who can make things happen.

DESCRIPTION

Casper, Wyoming is a city of approximately fifty one thousand people. The surrounding area consists of the Towns of Evansville and Mills, along with the County of Natrona. Altogether, there are approximately seventy five thousand people in and around Casper. Casper is located in the middle of Wyoming and the economy is booming due to energy development.

During 2003, Casper experienced five homicides. All five homicides were directly related to meth. Also during 2003, the Casper Police Department saw an increase in crimes, specifically those crimes related to the use of meth. An analysis of the crimes being assigned to the Detective Unit found that fifty to seventy percent were directly related to meth. While other problems were identified as being part of the increase in crime, it was obvious that meth was driving the criminal activity in Casper and the surrounding areas.

The current Chief of Police, Tom Pagel, had been hired by the City of Casper after retiring from the State of Wyoming Division of Criminal Investigation. At the State level Chief Pagel fought against the meth scourge with some success. At the local level, Chief Pagel saw that Law Enforcement alone could not solve the problem of meth. Chief Pagel decided to invite a group of community leaders to a meeting to determine a course of action in dealing with meth. Representatives from medical, treatment, government, school district, media and law enforcement met and the result was the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee.

Meth has been a problem in Casper and the surrounding areas since the late 1980's. Meth has been a growing problem, not only for law enforcement but all facets of the community. After the five homicides were found to be meth related, a thorough analysis of the cases being assigned to the Detective Unit was conducted. This analysis found that fifty to seventy percent of the cases assigned were directly related to meth. Nearly all auto burglaries as well as paper crimes were related to meth. Analysis found that burglaries and frauds were being committed in order to get money to purchase meth or to trade the items stolen for meth. Analysis of the drug arrests found that meth was rapidly approaching the same levels as marijuana arrests.

The community as a whole started to see an increase in hospital admissions related to meth usage. The Department of Family Services saw a dramatic increase in child placements due to meth related problems in the child's home. A hepatitis C outbreak was directly related to the sharing of needles by meth users. Jail admissions were escalating as more and more arrests were being made for meth and meth related crimes. The School District started to see more children being affected by meth use in their homes.

Prior to the development of the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee, there was very little interaction between the various agencies dealing with meth. Each entity was dealing with meth as best they could but there was no coordination or communication

between the entities. Results were spotty at best and in most cases very little was being done to treat the entire problem. The ultimate goal of the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee was to attack meth on a broad based front, to share information and to network with the various agencies fighting meth.

Once the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee came together, there was more interaction and discussion between the various agencies that were dealing with meth. Ideas were exchanged as well as information. The Casper Community Meth Watch Committee soon realized that an educational campaign was needed to inform the public of the dangers and costs associated with meth. The Committee also realized that the educational campaign needed to present information that was relevant and that all agencies were distributing the same message.

The educational campaign started with talks to various groups both in the Casper area as well as the State of Wyoming. The Committee then decided to broaden the educational campaign and the planning for the first Meth Awareness Conference was started. The first Meth Awareness Conference was held in January of 2004. Over 600 people attended the two day conference with an additional 600 people attending the free public session. The free public session was held for the citizenry in the Casper area. Comments received from those who attended found the free public session to be very informative. The day sessions were designed for professionals in the field to include treatment, medical, education and public safety.

As part of the educational process, the Committee identified businesses as a key partner in the fight against meth. In March of 2004, the first Meth Business Meeting was held. The meeting was a combination of education about meth and also the impact that businesses play in the fight against meth. Over forty businesses attended the meeting and during the presentation, drug testing for businesses was introduced. Based on this meeting, a major fast food franchise here in Casper decided to drug test and a drug store started to require identification for those individuals purchasing needles.

The next initiative by the Committee was the first Meth Town Hall Meeting. One of the concerns of the Committee was that the average citizen was not getting the information being put out by the Committee. Therefore, it was decided to hold a Meth Town Hall Meeting in September of 2004. Over 125 people attended with an unknown number watching on the local cable channel. Questions were submitted via the internet and the Committee had forms available at the Meth Town Hall Meeting for those attending to submit questions. The Committee had a panel to answer the questions submitted by the public. The panel consisted of Law Enforcement, School District and Treatment experts. Responses from those in attendance were very positive.

The Committee then identified issues the Committee felt needed to be brought up at the State level. Three issues were identified and they were meth lab clean up, meth precursors and monies for law enforcement and treatment. Sponsors were found for the bills and they were filed. Members of the Committee went to Cheyenne, Wyoming and made a presentation to members of the State House and Senate. Members of the

Committee then testified on behalf of the meth related issues. Of the three issues, the monies for law enforcement and treatment and the meth precursor bills both passed. The meth lab bill died on the House floor.

In January of 2005 the second Meth Awareness Conference was held. The Conference featured both local and nationally known speakers. Over 600 people once again attended the conference. The free public session for the members of the community attracted seven to eight hundred people. The free public session featured a panel of recovered meth addicts who presented their stories to the audience. The evaluations that were received indicated those attending the Conference found it to be informative and worth their while to attend.

March of 2005 saw the second Business Drug Testing Meeting. Presentations were made by businesses that were already drug testing, a legal update and then a question and answer session was held. The "We Drug Test" continues to grow and the attendance of over 50 businesses at the second Drug Testing Meeting indicated the interest of local businesses. While there were a few people in the community who questioned the need for drug testing in the business community, the feedback from businesses and the general community has been very favorable.

In October of 2005 the second Meth Town Hall Meeting was held. United States Senator Craig Thomas and United States Representative Barbara Cubin were in attendance along with over 100 citizens from the Casper area. The Meth Town Hall Meeting was again broadcast on the local cable channel. Presentations were made by local businesses, the School District, Law Enforcement and Treatment Professionals. Once again questions were taken from the audience as well as via the internet. Feedback from those in attendance was very positive and both Senator Thomas and Representative Cubin were impressed with the turn out and the presentations.

The Committee found that the public awareness campaign had resulted in a far greater awareness on the part of the public concerning the dangers of meth. The "We Drug Test" campaign for businesses continued to expand and was featured in the local paper and the local television stations. The Casper Police Department continued to find that meth was driving the crime rate in Casper with fifty to seventy percent of the crimes reported to the Detective Unit being traced back to meth. Both of the homicides on 2005 were directly related to meth. The Department of Family Services found that eighty percent of all foster care placements were directly related to meth. With this in mind, funding was obtained from a local foundation to conduct a strategic survey of the meth problem in the Casper area.

Two outside consultants were hired to conduct the survey with a completion date of October 2005. The two consultants conducted numerous interviews with all of the stakeholders both in Casper, the surrounding area and throughout the State. Areas examined by the Consultants were Public Safety, Courts, Corrections, Treatment, Prevention, Public Health, Neighborhoods, Data/Communications and Work Force. The

strategic survey was intended to answer the question of where we had been, where we were and where we needed to go in order to fight meth.

Upon completion of the Strategic Survey, it was presented to the Mayors of Casper, Evansville, Mills, the Casper City Council and the Natrona County Commissioners. The Strategic Survey contained specific recommendations which the Consultants felt needed to be addressed if the Casper area was going to make a difference in the fight against meth. All of the governmental entities accepted the Strategic Survey and the recommendations became the road map for the next step.

The next step was to get the input and buy in from the community; therefore, a Citizens Facilitation Initiative was set up. An Implementation Committee was chosen to include the Chief of Police, Casper City Manager, Mayor's of Casper, Evansville, Mills, County Commissioner, Superintendent of Education, CEO of the Hospital and the Editor of the Paper sitting on the Implementation Committee. The Implementation Committee then solicited applications from those who wanted to sit on the Citizens Facilitation Committee. The Implementation Committee then selected the members for the Citizens Facilitation Committee. Funding for the facilitation process was obtained from the various governmental entities, private foundations and from the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee.

The Citizens Facilitation Committee held hearings throughout January 2006 and into February of 2006. During the course of the hearings, local and nationally known speakers were heard from as well as local businesses, law enforcement and the general public. Once again the media was a vital part of getting the information out to the public concerning the Citizens Facilitation Initiative. Once the hearings were concluded, the Citizens Facilitation Committee issued its final report. The report dealt with identification and early intervention; treatment; law enforcement and judicial; prevention and community involvement; and data/communications. In each of the areas, critical action steps were identified along with both short term and long term goals. The Implementation Committee accepted the report from the Citizens Facilitation Committee. The Implementation then established sub-committees to address the recommendations of the Citizens Facilitation Committee. Chairs were then selected for each sub-committee.

Once the chairs for each sub-committee had been selected, members for each of the sub-committees were selected and the sub-committees started their work. Each sub-committee was to meet and address the critical action steps as well as the short and long term priorities. Each Chair was told that money was not to be considered at this stage and they were to develop strategies based on best practices and innovative thinking. As of the writing of this application, several of the subcommittees have completed their work, and the rest are to be finished by July 30, 2006.

Once the sub-committees have completed their work and turned in their final report, the Implementation Committee will then start to implement the work of the sub-committees. While most of the strategies have yet to be implemented, some have. An example of one of the goals that was developed by the Law Enforcement Sub-Committee concerns drug charges. One of the recommendations made by the Citizens Facilitation Initiative was to have all misdemeanor drug charges go through one court. After the Law Enforcement Sub-Committee had its first meeting and discussed this goal, a meeting was held with the Police Chiefs of Evansville and Mills. Both agreed to have all misdemeanor drug charges filed through Circuit Court. By doing this, there will be consistency in sentencing, probation, assessment and treatment.

While the Citizens Facilitation Initiative was being conducted, the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee held the third annual Meth Awareness Conference in January of 2006. Over 700 people attended the two day conference. Once again the Conference featured both local and nationally known speakers. At the free public session for the citizens of the community, an update on the panel of recovered addicts was given. A panel of victims who had been affected by meth was the featured presentation at the free public session. Over 500 people attended the free public session. Evaluations of the conference showed that the information being presented was relevant and timely. Planning was started on the fourth annual Meth Awareness Conference.

In May of 2006, the third Business Drug Testing meeting was held. Over fifty people attended the meeting. Presentations were made by businesses that drug test, Workers Comp Division and a legal update. The "We Drug Test" has grown with over 170 businesses drug testing. The businesses that drug test are recognized with posters, window decals, and billboards.

Members of the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee, in conjunction with the Casper-Natrona County Health Department, met concerning the lack of standards or requirements for meth lab clean up. Due to the lack of initiative at the State level, it was felt that something had to be done. The Casper-Natrona County Health Department wrote standards for meth lab clean up which were then put out for public comment. After the comment period, public hearings were held and the Casper-Natrona County Health Department approved the regulations concerning meth lab clean up. The Regulations will go into effect on August 1, 2006 and will mandate that a structure that has been used for a meth lab will have to be cleaned up prior to human occupancy. The Casper-Natrona County Health Department will post the property as uninhabitable until such time as it is cleaned up and meets the standards as established by the Casper-Natrona County Health Department.

Chief Pagel has had meetings with the Governor and the Departments of Health and Substance Abuse. In his meetings, the model that Casper has developed to deal with meth has been discussed extensively. The general consensus is that the Casper model is the best way to deal with the meth problem at the local level. The State will use the

Casper Model as the way communities in Wyoming should set up their local meth committees.

In the two and a half years since the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee started, three Meth Awareness Conferences have been held; two Meth Town Hall meetings have been held; three Business Drug Testing meetings have been held. The Strategic Plan was completed and that led to the Citizens Facilitation Initiative. The input from the community has resulted in specific short and long term strategies for dealing with meth. Casper now has a specific plan in place for dealing with meth.

Data continues to be collected concerning the campaign against meth. The most recent Citizen Survey conducted by the City of Casper had sections dealing with campaign against meth. The survey showed that eighty two percent of those surveyed thought the meth issue was significant or very significant. Twenty eight percent of those surveyed said they had watched or attended the Meth Town Hall meeting. Sixty four percent of those surveyed approved of how the City of Casper was dealing with the meth problem.

The Casper Community Meth Watch Committee continues to be active in the battle against meth use in the Casper area. Plans are in process for the 2007 Meth Awareness Conference, further meetings for business drug testing, legislative initiatives and continued cooperation with all agencies dealing with the meth problem.

AGENCY AND OFFICER INFORMATION

Originally the meth initiative was started by Chief Pagel. He had the foresight and wisdom to use the experiences he had gained at the State level and apply them at the local level. The Casper Police Department now has officers at all ranks participating in the meth initiative. Patrol Officers are encouraged to deal with drug information at the line level and if need be, they can pass the information onto the Central Drug Enforcement Team.

No training on problem orientated policing was conducted prior the start of the meth initiative. Officers of the Casper Police Department are highly encouraged to use the resources available to solve problems as they arise in their patrol areas. All of those involved in the meth initiative have a firm grasp of problem orientated policing and apply it to the meth initiative. There were no additional incentives given to officers who are participating in the meth initiative. In fact, the duties that are associated with the meth initiative are additional duties.

It is with a great deal of pride the author of this application can report that outside of the personnel time, the Casper Police Department has not had to expend any financial resources on the meth initiative. The Casper Community Meth Watch Committee has raised all of the funds needed to put on the Conferences, Meth Town Hall Meetings and the Business Drug Testing Meetings. The monies for the Strategic Plan came from a local foundation and the monies for the Citizens Facilitation Initiative came from local governments, private foundations and the Casper Community Meth Watch Committee.

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