

### Why get involved with reducing substance abuse?

The not-so-hidden costs of substance abuse are staggering, especially to government. Consider this\*:

- The total cost to society for alcohol and drug abuse is estimated to be \$283.6 billion each year. Government bears an estimated 46 percent of this cost through enforcement, prosecution, incarceration, lost productivity and increased health care costs.
- In 2004, 54.1 percent of the total federal prison population was incarcerated because of drug-related crime.
- The cost of incarceration is estimated at \$39,600 per year.
- Of the convicted inmates in the U.S. in 2002, 52.6 percent reported drug use during the month before the offense, and 28.8 percent reported being under the influence of drugs at the time of the offense.
- According to a recent Journal of the American Medical Association report, 92 percent of domestic abuse assailants reported use of alcohol or other drugs on the day of the assault.

National Association of Counties has recognized the threat that substance abuse, especially methamphetamine, poses to community and county safety by placing the reduction of methamphetamine use in their goals.

### What's in it for us?

Collaborating with a coalition to reduce substance abuse increases the likelihood that an effective comprehensive solution will be reached for such a multi-faceted problem. Other benefits include:

**Visibility and Public Image**—When county government is involved, the public perceives additional importance to the issue. Similarly, county government is perceived as responsive to serious public concerns.

**Gaining the community perspective of need can result in relevant policy, appropriate infrastructure, effective services and tailored funding options.** Working collaboratively with a county coalition, it is possible to build a county-wide infrastructure to more quickly recognize and intervene on methamphetamine use and production by coordinating and building partnerships with other organizations that sell meth ingredients (retailers, pharmacists, agricultural product suppliers) and those that are likely to come in contact with meth production or toxic fumes (realtors, hotel personnel, home repair professions, used car dealers, emergency response, fire and law enforcement).

**Reduce cost and allow for re-allocation of vital resources**—over time, reducing methamphetamine and other drug use will reduce the hefty burden placed on the system by social service and incarceration costs, and allow for re-allocation of these resources to other key priorities.

**Enhance economic development**—a county that works to reduce substance abuse raises the quality of life for its citizens, and can utilize its resources to attract business and services, increase safety and focus its attention on growth.

**Increase public-private partnerships that stretch taxpayer dollars**—a workforce that is equipped with the information it takes to balance health, work and home is more productive and proactive, resulting in greater safety, less absenteeism and better decision-making.

Lending your support to reducing substance abuse will increase the health, safety and quality of life for all citizens in the county, and expand the county's appeal across the board.

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\* Statistics from Join Together; National Institute on Drug Abuse; Bureau of Justice Statistics; Schneider Institute for Health Policy, Brandeis University