

A STATE OF THE STATE REGARDING OKLAHOMA'S DRUG THREATS

by Mark Woodward Public Information and Education Officer for the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics (Submitted by Gene Hoyt MD BHHHC)

I have been with the Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics (OBN) for nearly 20 years. During that time, the most common question I get asked is, "What is the biggest drug problem in Oklahoma?" Most people would think methamphetamine, or maybe prescription drugs. Those are good answers. However, our biggest drug threat is actually our attitude about drugs. Not just in Oklahoma, but across the United States attitudes about drugs have changed drastically over the past two decades. Our country has shifted from a "war on drugs" attitude to a "this is my life, my body, I should have the right to do what I want with it" attitude.

This attitude shift gained momentum in 1996 when California passed Proposition 215 to legalize "medical" marijuana. Dozens of other states have followed suit over the past several years, including some states which have out-right legalized marijuana for recreational use. This well-funded movement has helped sway opinions on marijuana at a time when we should be doing more to stop drug abuse. It sends a message to kids or uninformed adults that marijuana is a harmless plant which has medical value when smoked. Research shows just the opposite. Marijuana continues to grow in strength, with THC (the psycho-active ingredient which causes intoxication) reaching historic potency levels. While there are chemicals in marijuana that may help some patients, these chemicals are already available in pills and liquids. Most physicians never prescribe these medications because there are safer, stronger, more effective treatments available. But public opinion about marijuana continues to move in favor of legalization and decriminalization which will ultimately lead to greater abuse. The three most commonly abused substances are tobacco, alcohol and prescription drugs. These products are legal, taxed and regulated. Legalization doesn't help the problem. It opens a flood gates for greater abuse.

In Oklahoma, prescription drug abuse is currently our biggest specific drug problem. It is an epidemic, with nearly 400,000 Oklahomans admitting they've used prescription drugs for non-medicinal purposes. Oklahoma is first in the nation in prescription pain killer abuse, and fifth in opiate medication deaths, according to the Centers for Disease Control in 2013. Approximately eighty-percent of Oklahoma drug-related deaths involve at least one prescription drug in the autopsy toxicology report. Many of these deaths involved people going to multiple physicians to seek drugs to feed an addiction, also known as "Doctor Shopping". The Oklahoma Bureau of Narcotics (OBN) urges physicians to utilize our agency's Prescription Monitoring Program (PMP) to run a patient's prescription history prior to prescribing to ensure the patients isn't already visiting other facilities to get medication without the doctor's knowledge. Oklahomans are also stealing medication from home medicine cabinets, so it is important people safeguard or lock up their medication, or safely dispose old, unwanted medication because addicts or teens agers frequently take these drugs and trade or sell them on the streets or in schools. OBN has placed more than 150 drug disposal boxes in police and sheriff lobbies across the state. Oklahomans can find a box near their community by visiting our web site at www.ok.gov/obndd. This statewide drug disposal program

is the only one of its kind in the nation. Since OBN started collecting unwanted medication in 2011, nearly 80 tons have been turned in. OBN has a wonderful partnership with Covanta Energy in Tulsa. They destroy the drugs at no charge to OBN or the state, and they convert the waste material into clean energy. It is a win-win for Oklahoma.

Methamphetamine continues to be another grave concern for our state. Over the past decade, OBN has passed several bills at the capitol to limit access to the key ingredient, pseudoephedrine which has dramatically reduced meth labs in our state. But while meth production is down, meth use and abuse remains steadily rising as Mexican drug cartels continue to flood the streets of the United States with crystal meth or "ice".

There has been a lot of news articles written over the past six months regarding a rise in heroin in the United States. Oklahoma is no exception. We are seeing a rise in Mexican tar or black tar heroin use in our state. This is due to cheaper prices for heroin verse the higher cost of pain pills sought by opiate addicts. However, it is important to note that heroin is not nearly as big of a problem in our state compared to the rampant abuse currently seen on the east coast. Heroin use in Oklahoma still ranks far below marijuana, prescription drugs, methamphetamine, and crack cocaine abuse in our state.

Another troubling threat in our state is the abuse of "synthetic drugs". This includes man-made products that are smoked to mimic marijuana and are sold in gas stations or on the internet as potpourri or incense known as "K2" or "Spice". And while they produce a similar euphoria to marijuana, these chemicals have many other adverse side effects that have landed several people in the hospital. There have also been at least three documents deaths from smoking synthetic marijuana. Oklahoma has passed several laws since 2008 to outlaw these chemicals. However, they are quickly replaced with different but similar, legal chemicals. There are also synthetics that mimic cocaine or meth that are sold as "bath salts". It's a white powder that is typically snorted or injected. Most are made by amateur chemists who purchased the raw materials on the internet and manufacture their own unique synthetic drugs. As a result, the product and dangers can vary from person to person and state to state. Users have no idea what they are actually ingesting and how they will react.

This brings up the next important question, "What can we do about the current drug issues in Oklahoma?" As stated at the beginning, we have an attitude problem. We MUST change this attitude. We've got to work together with parents, schools, physicians and community leaders to educate our youth about these dangers and encourage them to stay off this path. OBN has an entire division dedicated to providing free school and community drug awareness programs. Kids who abuse drugs are much more likely to abuse drugs as adults. When they have kids, their children will likely follow this same pattern. We are arresting second and third generation drug users and dealers. However, if we can get kids to stay away from drugs, they are more likely to become adults who stay drug-free. When they have children of their own, they are more likely to share this drug-free attitude with their kids. Then, and only then, will we break this cycle of addiction.



Photo L-R: Mary McCormick, SFN Business Committee Secretary; Orvena

Gregory, SFN BC Second Chief; Stella Nullake, SFN Business Committee Member; Kiana Paningsoro, United Nations Youth Council President; Emily Nanaeto, United Nations Youth Council Treasurer; Santana Spang, United Nations Youth Council Secretary; Kylie Falls, United Nations Youth Council Reporter and Trey

Thank You

The United Nations Youth Council of the Sac & Fox Nation would like to thank the Sac & Fox Nation Business Committee for their generous donation to help with travel expenses for the National UNITY (United National Indian Tribal Youth) Conference to be held June 28 – July 3, 2014 in Portland, Oregon.

Sac and Fox Nation Housing Authority Expanding Service

The Housing Authority of the Sac and Fox Nation is expanding our service to assist our housing participants in getting rent delinquencies paid, getting in compliance with Housing policies and assist with other concerns.

Two locations are listed for your convenience:

Where: Cushing Chamber of Commerce
When: 1st and 3rd Wednesdays
Time: 9:00 am to 1:00 pm

Second location

Where: Sac and Fox Education Bldg.
When: 2nd and 4th Wednesdays
Time: 9:00 am to 3:00 pm

If you should have any questions feel free to contact;

Erica Masquat,
 Tenant Accounts Specialist
 @ 1-800-831-7515

Oklahoma Tobacco Helpline
1 800 QUIT NOW

RAP Department Notice

The RAP Department is currently out of funds in the following programs:
 Hardship, Emergency Appliances, Vision, Dental, Dentures, Orthodontic and Hearing Aids.

As of May 23rd 2014 there is \$20,631.02 remaining in the Tribal Energy Program for the Cooling season. The department can also accept 7 more applicants for the Lawn Care Program.

Please be sure to submit a copy of your membership card with all applications.

June 26th @ 7PM
AND
June 27th @ 9AM

Summer Youth Soccer Camp

June 26th and 27th ages 7-16
 Any Tribal certified youth
 Registration is open now until the day of the first camp
 Both days will run 2 hours
 Space is limited to the first 30 kids to register and those 30 will receive a free soccer ball after attending both days!

All sessions will be instructed by Dewayne Tiger

For questions or to sign up call or email:

Anthony Ramirez, 918-968-9531 ext 3039; Anthony.Ramirez@ihs.gov or Dewayne Tiger, 405-382-3701 Tiger.D@sno-nsn.gov

Presented to you by:
 Sac and Fox Nation Special Diabetes Program
 Seminole Nation Diabetes Program

LIHEAP Funds Available

Liheap funds are available for tribal members (all federally recognized tribes) that live within the jurisdiction and are within the income guidelines. The Tribal Energy guidelines state that Liheap is to be used first if people are eligible and funds are available. There are copies of the Tribal Energy guidelines available at the Sac and Fox Nation Social Services Building and also at Shawnee Housing Center.

918-968-3526 Ext. 2001 & 2011