



Put In Your 2¢ Worth...

About 2¢ a drink yields \$44 million annually
to reduce the impact of
alcohol problems in Missouri.

Question:

Legislators appear to be very concerned about the methamphetamine threat to public safety and health, but we don't hear much about profiles of meth users. Is it true that alcohol is a "gateway" to meth use?

Answer:

It is true that much more emphasis has been given to production of meth, and the very real hazards it poses, while little has been reported on meth use or users. It is also true that the "gateway concept" is not always understood. Alcohol use precedes a very large proportion of all non-prescription drug abuse, and the earlier one starts to drink, the higher the risk of illicit drug use, abuse and addiction. That includes methamphetamines.

MISSOURI IMPACT FACT #14

- A review of media reports on meth use confirms the finding that alcohol intoxication frequently accompanies methamphetamine use.
- The only available profile of Missouri meth users is found in a policy brief, which reviews data on 4,082 admissions to treatment in Missouri. The report notes that "meth is often used either in combination with or sequentially with alcohol, marijuana or cocaine. It is often a secondary or tertiary drug used with these other substances." (1)
- "The sequence from alcohol and tobacco use to marijuana use, and then to other drugs, has been found in almost all long-term studies of drug use. The order of drug use in this progression is largely consistent with social attitudes, norms and availability." (2)
- "For someone who ever drank or smoked, the risk of moving on to marijuana is 65 times higher than that for a person who never smoked or drank. The risk of moving on to cocaine is 104 times higher for someone at least once in his or her lifetime than for a person who never did." (2)
- A recent Missouri study confirms this finding: "alcohol was the first drug used by 61.3% of marijuana users (in the study). Tobacco was the first drug used by 19.4%." (3)

(1) *Methamphetamines in Missouri*, Missouri Division of Alcohol and Drug Abuse, Department of Mental Health, April, 2004, Page . See also <http://www.missourimeth.org/meth2004.pdf>.

(2) *Preventing Drug Use Among Children and Adolescents*. National Institute on Drug Abuse, National Institute of Health, 2001, Page 7.

(3) "Is Alcohol a Gateway Drug?" A. Myers and M. Petty, Missouri Western State College, Department of Psychology, 2004.

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