NEW MOTHER FACT SHEET

Methamphetamine Use During Pregnancy

What is methamphetamine?
Methamphetamine, commonly known as “meth,” “crystal,” “crank,” “ice” and “speed” – is an illegal and dangerous drug that can be snorted, swallowed, smoked, injected or inhaled. A central nervous system stimulant, methamphetamine causes the brain to be flooded with dopamine, a chemical that stimulates pleasure.

The use of methamphetamine causes short- and long-term health effects, including stroke, irregular heart beat, heart damage, high blood pressure, stomach cramps, shaking, anxiety, insomnia, paranoia, and hallucinations. Continued use of methamphetamine will likely result in dependence on the drug.

What are the effects of methamphetamine on babies during pregnancy and after birth?
- Methamphetamine use during pregnancy affects development of a baby's:
  - Brain
  - Spinal cord
  - Heart
  - Kidneys

- Methamphetamine use during pregnancy may result in prenatal complications, such as premature delivery and birth deformities.

- High doses of the drug may cause a baby's blood pressure to rise rapidly, leading them to suffer strokes or brain hemorrhages before birth.

- Babies whose mothers used methamphetamine during pregnancy may experience learning disabilities, growth and developmental delays.

- Methamphetamine-exposed babies may experience gastrochisis and other problems with the development of their intestines. (Gastrochisis is a condition in which a baby is born with a hole in the abdomen, causing the intestines to be outside the body.)

- As a result of methamphetamine use by their mothers, some babies may suffer developmental and skeletal abnormalities (such as clubfoot). Some babies are born without parts of their arms or legs.

- Because methamphetamine affects transmitters in the brain, babies often experience sleep disturbances and altered behavioral patterns. These babies have been described as "irritable babies."

Continued on back page
• Full-term babies born to mothers who use methamphetamine will likely have difficulty sucking and swallowing, much like premature babies.

• Often babies born to meth-addicted women cannot tolerate stimuli such as human touch and light. These babies often display tremors and coordination problems.

What are the long-term effects?
The effects of methamphetamine use on brain development may last for many years. School-aged children whose mothers used methamphetamine while pregnant are more likely to be hyperactive or to have attention deficit disorders, learning disabilities and unprovoked fits of anger.

If you need additional information or help, please contact the following:

West Central Human Service Center
Bismarck .................................... 701.328.8888 or 1.888.328.2662

Lake Region Human Service Center
Devils Lake ............................... 701.665.2200 or 1.888.607.8610

Badlands Human Service Center
Dickinson .................................... 701.227.7515 or 1.888.227.7525

Southeast Human Service Center
Fargo ........................................... 701.298.4500 or 1.888.342.4900

Northeast Human Service Center
Grand Forks ............................... 701.795.3000 or 1.800.845.3731

South Central Human Service Center
Jamestown ......... 701.253.6300 or 1.800.639.6292

North Central Human Service Center
Minot ....................... 701.857.8500 or 1.888.470.6968

Northwest Human Service Center
Williston ....................... 701.774.4600 or 1.800.231.7724

For pamphlets and other materials, contact Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Prevention Resource Center at 1.800.642.6744.