



OFFICE OF THE  
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**PRESS RELEASE**  
**FIGHT AGAINST METHAMPHETAMINE CONTINUES**  
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Recently, the Shasta County District Attorney Bureau of Investigations reported on their efforts to combat methamphetamine as part of a grant through the Redding Police Department. In 2007, the Redding Police Department along with other law enforcement agencies, applied for and received a grant from the U.S. Department of Justice Community Orientated Policing Services to specifically combat methamphetamine in our community. The grant was to expire today, but a 6 month extension has been granted.

As part of the grant, the District Attorney's Office received funds to perform searches and checks on defendants who are on misdemeanor probation for a methamphetamine offense starting in August of 2008. Because of a lack of resources, misdemeanor offenders generally do not have a probation officer to monitor their compliance with the orders of the court. These were the defendants on which the District Attorney focused. The grant allowed for the District Attorney investigators to work about 15 hours per week on this task.

After much research, the investigators identified 115 probationers who met this criterion. Ninety-three attempts were made to search these probationers. Because so little effort had previously been made to check on these probationers, some claimed not to even know that they were on probation. Of the 93 attempts to search, 39 actual searches were made with 27 being found in compliance and 12 out of compliance and in violation of their probation. During the searches, 8 subjects were arrested and 3 had new charges filed against them. Of the 115 probationers, 30 could not be located and 20 could not be searched because they were deceased, in prison or in jail.

This program provides some of the only accountability misdemeanor methamphetamine offenders receive while on probation. Misdemeanor offenses generally carry lighter penalties, meaning that the incentive is low for complying with probationary terms such as completing drug treatment programs. Also, misdemeanor offenses involving methamphetamine generally result in probation to the court without a probation officer or anyone to supervise or ensure that the offender complies with the court's orders. Felony offenders or those in the Proposition 36 program receive far more supervision and drug testing through the probation department.

The lack of incentive to participate in and complete a drug treatment program, the lack of supervision for misdemeanor offenses and the serious danger that methamphetamine poses to our community, led District Attorney Jerry Benito to institute a policy requiring the filing of all methamphetamine cases as felonies except in unusual cases. The policy was implemented in mid-2005. Also that year, the federal government placed certain cold medications behind pharmacy counters. Since that time, the number of methamphetamine cases filed in Shasta County has steadily decreased from a high of 822 cases in 2005 to only 468 in 2008. After the first 6 months of 2009, only 207 cases have been filed. At the present pace, 2009 would see a nearly 50% reduction in the number of methamphetamine cases compared to 2005.

Although this steady decline is certainly welcome news, it certainly does not mean that the fight against methamphetamine is over. Methamphetamine remains a very dangerous drug and continued vigilance is necessary to decrease its presence in our community.

For questions, contact District Attorney Jerry Benito at 245-6310.