



Idaho ups campaign to fight meth use

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By: Kendel Murrant

BOISE — Idaho's campaign to curb meth use will mirror a no-holes-barred, edgy campaign formed in Montana to drive the dangers of the illegal drug into thousands of homes.

Idaho Administrator of Drug Policy Debbie Field has appointed a new executive director to undertake bringing the Montana Meth Project to Idaho.

Megan Ronk, former criminal justice policy advisor to former Gov. Dirk Kempthorne, brings "tremendous experience," Field said, noting her master's degree in business administration and her government background.

Ronk will lead the Idaho Meth Project, closely based on the Montana Meth Project, which launched in 2005.

Montana's version includes television commercials, radio spots and billboards that aim to open people's eyes to the heavy price that comes with using methamphetamine.

Ronk intends to follow the Montana strategy, which she said "treats meth almost like a consumer product" then "uses consumer strategies to un-sell meth."

The ads combine graphic scenes of how teens' lives have been ruined by meth.

A teenage boy whose life centers solely around meth.

A teenage girl who sees her body riddled with sores caused by meth use.

Friends dropping off an unconscious teen at a hospital emergency room and fleeing the scene.

A teenager threatening to kill his parents because they've thrown him out of the house.

The Idaho Meth Project will use the same types of commercials and billboards. But Ronk said Idaho's version will also have its own radio spots, using the testimonies of former Idaho meth users. She is also planning a series of polls and surveys to get a feel for the dynamics of the drug in Idaho.

"We want to mold this campaign specifically to Idaho's mentality of meth," Ronk said.

Organizers will also launch a Web site for the Idaho Meth Project.

"For the most part everything will be done just like in Montana," Ronk said. "We want to replicate the same model and methodology."

Ronk said that through her past experience as Kempthorne's criminal justice adviser, she developed "a passion for these issues."

"I've spent time at the juvenile and adult (jail) facilities, talking with offenders and their family members who have been devastated by the impact of meth on the community," she said. "I was so excited to have

the chance to deter young people from trying this horrific drug.”

The new executive director believes the Idaho Meth Project will bring change to the growing meth problem Idaho faces.

“I think the long term impacts will be tremendous,” Ronk said.