

## WORKING UPSTREAM

How can we address the drivers of methamphetamine use in Iowa?

### Methamphetamine Use

Methamphetamine is a powerful stimulant that when inhaled or injected, produces a euphoric and energetic high. In recent years, methamphetamine has become more prevalent in Iowa communities. It has also become more potent and affordable, and most concerning, laced with powerful opioids such as fentanyl that have contributed to a record number of emergency department visits and overdose deaths.

### Understanding the Problem

To understand the patterns of use in Iowa, our research team conducted nearly 40 interviews with people who use methamphetamine (PWUM) and led focus groups with an additional 25 people in treatment for methamphetamine use disorder. We also spoke with service providers who work directly with PWUM, including housing providers, public safety officers, community leaders, and various social service providers, to understand the risks and challenges they observed. Finally, a statistical analysis was conducted to understand and identify the emerging trends and longstanding patterns of how PWUM seek treatment.

### Key Drivers of Use

The research identified four broad reasons why people use methamphetamine, including:



- Body Image Insecurities
- Improved Productivity at Work and in Family Life
- Pleasure, Party, and Play
- Coping with Physical, Mental, and Emotional Pain

### Where are the Intervention Points?

With ongoing challenges in treating methamphetamine use, prevention efforts focusing on the upstream causes of use are likely to have meaningful impacts. For example, implementing strategies to improve body image among the methamphetamine at-risk population could be a powerful prevention strategy. Another idea is to partner with employers in industries where methamphetamine use is common to develop tailored solutions to meet people where they are. Finally, engage in trauma mitigation efforts that establish healthier strategies for dealing with past pain.

Scan to read more about  
Iowa's methamphetamine use

