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METH AND STEROID USE DECLINE SHARPLY AMONG YOUTH; OVERALL YOUTH DRUG USE DOWN AGAIN

(Washington) — The use of methamphetamine and steroids has dropped sharply among young people since 2001, according to the University of Michigan's 2005 *Monitoring the Future* survey released today. The use of meth among 8th, 10th, and 12th graders, combined, has dropped by approximately one-third since 2001. The declines were 34 percent, 30 percent, and 36 percent, respectively for lifetime, past year, and past month use among these youth. Steroid use also dropped dramatically among the same population since 2001. According to the survey, the use of steroids was down 38 percent, 37 percent, and 30 percent for lifetime, past year, and past month use.

Overall teen drug use also continues to decline. Trend analysis for youth current use of any illicit drug from 2001 to 2005 among 8th, 10th and 12th graders shows a drop of 19 percent. This translates into nearly 700,000 fewer youth using illicit drugs in 2005 than in 2001.

"Teens are getting the message. Drugs are harmful and will not only hurt their brains and bodies, but also damage their futures," said John P. Walters, Director of National Drug Control Policy, following the release of the MTF data at a press conference this morning.

"Meth is a particularly harmful drug for teens. While we are encouraged by our progress against it, we need to follow through. Despite the progress in reducing teen drug use, teens and their parents often underestimate the risks of marijuana. Indeed one in four 10th graders reported using marijuana last year and almost half (45%) of 12th graders reported using marijuana at least once in their lifetime. Marijuana is a dangerous, addictive drug. The progress we have made is important, but we need to continue to educate our young people about the growing list of harms associated with the drug."

DEA Administrator Karen P. Tandy said, "Today marks a resounding victory in the battle against drugs. Without DEA's enforcement operations to reduce the drug supply, prevention won't take root and treatment won't succeed. For DEA, reducing drug availability is the key to protecting our young people, which is part of the reason both meth and steroid use have been slashed by a third since 2001."

Monitoring the Future also noted reductions in use in nearly every drug in every drug prevalence category between 2001 and 2005, including:

- Marijuana remains the most commonly used illicit drug among teens, yet usage rates are declining. Marijuana use dropped in all three categories: lifetime (13%), past year (15%), and 30-day use (19%). Current use of marijuana decreased 28 percent among 8th graders (from 9.2% to 6.6%), and 23 percent among 10th graders (from 19.8% to 15.2%)
- Declines in current use of hallucinogens and LSD use by nearly two thirds and current Ecstasy (MDMA) use by nearly two thirds
- The use of alcohol by youth, including those who report having been drunk, is also down since 2001

- Use of cigarettes is down in all four categories (lifetime, past month, daily, and ½ pack + per day) in all three grades
- A decrease in some categories of club drugs, including rohypnol, GHB, and ketamine

Cocaine has remained stable across the four-year period for all grades in all prevalence categories; the number of current heroin users has remained stable at relatively low prevalence levels (0.5%) among all grades.

Prescription drug abuse remains troubling. Oxycontin is the only drug for which the 2005 MTF reports an increase among all three graders combined: past year use increased from 2.7 percent in 2002 to 3.4 percent in 2005, an increase of 26 percent. (MTF began measuring the use of Oxycontin in 2002).

The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign has made great strides in its efforts to alert teens and parents about the dangers and harms of drug use, including marijuana. There is concern that funding reductions in recent years are starting to produce erosion in the perception of harm of marijuana use among young teens. Indeed, the MTF survey shows that among 8th graders, the perceived harm in smoking marijuana regularly which had been rising sharply in recent years, has decreased (from 76.2% to 73.9%).

“The decline in overall drug use is a success for the Media Campaign,” said Robert W. Denniston, Director of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign. “But we are worried about the effects that funding cuts will have on our ability to maintain the momentum we have built up over the years in reducing drug use among the nation’s young people.”

The MTF survey is designed to measure drug, alcohol and cigarette use and related attitudes among 8th, 10th and 12th grade students nationwide. Survey participants report their drug use behaviors across three time periods: lifetime, past year, and past month. This year, 49,347 students from 402 public and private schools participated in the survey. The survey is funded by the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), a component of HHS’s National Institutes of Health, and conducted since its inception by the University of Michigan. Information from this survey helps the nation to identify potential drug problem areas and ensure that resources are targeted to areas of greatest need.

The Media Campaign was created in 1998 by Congress with bipartisan support, with the goal of educating and enabling young people to reject illicit drugs. Counting on an unprecedented blend of public and private partnerships, non-profit community service organizations, volunteerism, and youth-to-youth communications, the Campaign is designed to reach Americans of diverse backgrounds with clear, consistent, and credible anti-drug messages.

The complete MTF survey results can be viewed at <http://monitoringthefuture.org>.