Methamphetamine Named Top Problem by Majority of County Law Enforcement Agencies in Western U.S.; Will the East Follow?

More than one-half of 500 county law enforcement agencies in the U.S. report that methamphetamine is their primary drug problem, according to a recent survey conducted by the National Association of Counties.* Three-fourths of law enforcement agencies in the Northwest and Southwest part of the country reported that, based on drug-related arrests in the last year, methamphetamine was the biggest problem in their county. More than one-half of responding agencies in the Upper Midwest (67%) and Lower Midwest (57%) reported the same. In contrast, around one-fourth of agencies in the Southeast and only 4% of those in the Northeast reported methamphetamine as their number one drug problem. While these findings support previous research indicating that the West and Midwest have been hit hardest by methamphetamine use (see CESAR FAX, Volume 14, Issue 12), they also suggest that the Eastern U.S. should be vigilant for any increase in methamphetamine-related problems.

*Surveys were conducted by Research, Inc., of Washington, D.C., with 500 county law enforcement agencies from 45 states (Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, and Rhode Island did not respond to the survey).

NOTE: Methamphetamine has historically been found in rural counties, which typically have smaller populations. More than three-fourths (81.6%) of the county law enforcement agencies responding to this survey were from counties with a population of less than 50,000. (In comparison, 70.1% of all counties in the U.S. have a population of less than 50,000.) Thus, the counties reporting a methamphetamine problem may actually represent a relatively small percentage of the U.S. population.