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Personal horrors aid meth fight

A television ad campaign by the Partnership for a Drug Free America shows a methamphetamine user with self-inflicted sores on her neck.

State launches ad blitz featuring addicts whose stories aim to battle the scourge of the popular drug.

By Peter Hecht
BEE CAPITOL BUREAU

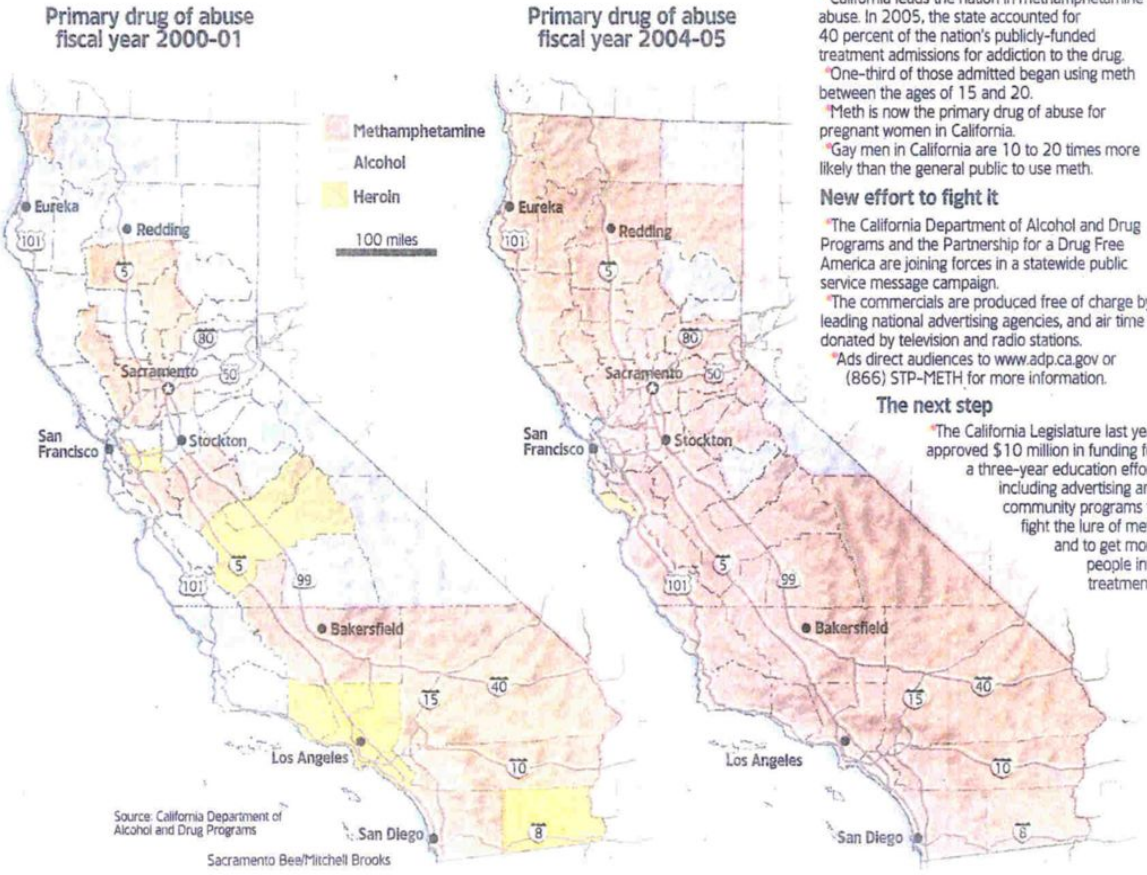
The camera draws in on a young woman's face. Her teeth are blackened with decay. Her neck is covered with red sores – the work of a manic methamphetamine addict who can't stop clawing at her own skin.

"It's really not a big deal," she says in an upbeat chatter. "It's like, you know, who's gonna tell? I mean look at me. You can't tell. I'm fine. Right? I'm fine."

The message is one of many television commercials – grim, stark and powerful – now being aired in California media markets. It's part of a campaign aiming to curb methamphetamine abuse in a state that is far and away the national leader in the meth scourge.

▶ METH, Page A4

Methamphetamine dominates treatment programs



Source: California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs

Sacramento Bee/Mitchell Brooks

The meth problem

- California leads the nation in methamphetamine abuse. In 2005, the state accounted for 40 percent of the nation's publicly-funded treatment admissions for addiction to the drug.
- One-third of those admitted began using meth between the ages of 15 and 20.
- Meth is now the primary drug of abuse for pregnant women in California.
- Gay men in California are 10 to 20 times more likely than the general public to use meth.

New effort to fight it

- The California Department of Alcohol and Drug Programs and the Partnership for a Drug Free America are joining forces in a statewide public service message campaign.
- The commercials are produced free of charge by leading national advertising agencies, and air time is donated by television and radio stations.
- Ads direct audiences to www.adp.ca.gov or (866) STP-METH for more information.

The next step

- The California Legislature last year approved $10 million in funding for a three-year education effort, including advertising and community programs to fight the lure of meth and to get more people into treatment.