



MethCheck may be coming to Floyd County, Indiana

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Law enforcement, with the help of state-of-the-art technology, is trying to stay one step ahead of methamphetamine users.

The technology is called MethCheck.

Appriss Inc., a Louisville-based company, offered the pilot program free of charge to the Floyd County Commissioners at a Tuesday night meeting. The program is designed to make it easier for pharmacists to track the sale of certain drugs -- which are used as ingredients in making meth.

Indiana law prohibits a person from purchasing more than 3.2 grams of ephedrine or pseudoephedrine in a seven-day period. Federal law states a person can not purchase more than 9 grams of the two drugs within a seven-day period.

Pharmacists are required to keep a log book with the customer's name, drug purchased and date it was purchased in order to keep track of their buying activity.

With MethCheck, the information would be placed in a computer which would make checking much easier, according to Michael Davis, of Appriss. In order for the program to be used in Floyd County, the commissioners would need to pass an ordinance requiring all pharmacies to log the information into the system.

The commissioners are expected to vote on the ordinance at the board's Feb. 16 meeting. Commissioner Steve Bush -- who is a New Albany Police Department detective -- said he likely will vote in favor of the ordinance.

"It sounds like a good program," Bush said. "It would be a good tool for law enforcement. It would be much easier to get the information."

New Albany Assistant Police Chief Mike Lawrence said reviewing logs of drug sales is "very time consuming." However, instead of checking logs at four or five different pharmacies, the data would be placed in the computer program, which would speed up the investigation process.

The MethCheck pilot program was launched in November 2005. So far, 97 percent of retailers in Kentucky are participating in the program, which includes all the large chains. On a national level, MethCheck managed more than 11 million sales in 2008 and there are 16,000 pharmacies in 43 states using the program.

Davis is offering the program free to Floyd, Clark and Harrison counties for one year. He said it's important for those counties to participate since some meth users hop from state to state to purchase ingredients.

"It's a very useful tool for law enforcement," Davis said. "Our goal is to get Indiana to follow Kentucky."

Getting all the pharmacies to participate and enforcing the ordinance will be the one drawback to starting the program in Floyd County. Prosecutor Keith Henderson said when the Indiana law was enacted, many pharmacies fought the legislation, citing a heavier workload and lost sales.

After the one-year pilot program, the commissioners could abolish the ordinance, pick up the tab -- which is around \$30 a month for each pharmacy -- or require the pharmacies to pick up the tab.