

## **Situation and Demand of Ice among Children and Youth in Juvenile Observation and Protection Centers**

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### **Abstract**

In Thailand, the problems of Ice in terms of trade and the spread have been continuously increased since last 5 years. These problems are obvious in the tourism provinces such as Bangkok and some provinces in Central and Southern regions. As a result, numbers of teenagers who were arrested due to Ice abuse are likely to rise in all regions throughout Thailand except in the Northeast. It was noticed that some certain factors may put young women at a higher risk to get involve with ice abuse as well as drug trade than men. There are certain target populations of ice distribution. Most of them are previous methamphetamine (Ya-ba) users. In addition, due to its effectiveness and high costs, drug dealers have developed new strategies and techniques in order to reach more young clients.

In order to solve problems regarding ice distributions in Thailand, an urgent study was taken place to explore ice situations and its related problems among children and youth in Juvenile Observation and Protection Centers. At the end of 2009, a study sample of 1,882 young drug offenses, aged between 7-18 years, was drawn from 25 centers. Findings revealed that most subjects were male (88%). The majority of them reported that they used to abuse methamphetamine and marijuana. By overall, the drug abuse rate of Ice, Kratom (*Mitragyna speciosa* korth) and volatile was pretty much the same as of 17.5%. The rate of Ice abuse among young women was 27% which was about two times higher than men. Youth who had sexual partners were likely to abuse multiple drugs comparing to single youth. The average rate of Ice users in each region of Thailand was consistent with the direction of the national arrest statistics. In addition, findings indicated that Ice abuse was significantly associated with methamphetamine abuse and the procurement or sale of drugs ( $p < .05$ ). The rate of Ice abuse among youth who were both methamphetamine users and drug supplies was 32%, which was about two times higher than the rate of those who were only methamphetamine users. The rate of Ice use among youth who were not methamphetamine users was 10% which was eight times higher than the rate of those who were not neither methamphetamine users nor drug suppliers. Furthermore, qualitative data depicted context of Ice abuse among each subgroup populations: 1) the retail network subgroup who had previous experiences as a drug dealer had been entrusted to try drug for free of charge and to deliver drug to affordable customers. This group had opportunity to develop himself/herself to be Ice as well as methamphetamine dealer. For example, one subject indicated that *"5 of their Ice customers were methamphetamine sellers"*; 2) the sex worker subgroup, both men and women, was a group who either used Ice to increase their sexual satisfaction or provided sex as an exchange of Ice. For example, one subject mentioned that *"I does not like to go out with guest, except if he has Ice"*; and 3) a subgroup of vendors who had some kind of relationships with the distribution networks such as relatives, friends, lovers, friends' lovers of etc. This group had an extensive and systematic network. Some networks were overlapped between Ice network, methamphetamine network and other modern drugs network. These networks were connected to the small drug retailers. The networking system was somehow a mean to easily introduce new drugs that could make more money to the market. In addition, new drugs might be brought to the market to serve the demands of their customers. In summary, finding from this study suggesting that the popularity of Ice and its connection to other type of drugs may put younger population at a higher risk of Ice users.

