

Local group releasing plan on drug abuse

BY KEVIN ABOUREZK / Lincoln Journal Star

Faced with mounting substance abuse problems and inadequate resources to deal with them, local private and governmental groups have combined their efforts to develop a plan to address substance abuse.

The Lincoln-Lancaster County Substance Abuse Action Plan will be released to the public today. Several of the 200 people who helped draft it say it is the first plan of its kind for the city and county.

"What this plan does is it really brings the community together," said Kit Boesch, human services administrator for Lincoln and Lancaster County. "It's a very action-oriented plan."

Boesch spearheaded the effort to draft the plan, which is essentially a policy guide for future substance abuse prevention and treatment efforts. The plan will eventually be included in the larger Community Services Implementation Plan, which is a human service planning process that addresses health issues in Lancaster County.

Said Lincoln Police Chief Tom Casady: "I think it's a good document for us to refer to when writing grants or trying to mobilize the public."

To develop the Substance Abuse Action Plan, three teams were formed to address three key areas: prevention, treatment and criminal justice.

Deb Sprague, director of the Lincoln Council on Alcoholism and Drugs and chair of the prevention team, said her team recommended studying local perceptions about substance abuse through surveys. She said the team also decided to focus its efforts on 12- to 17-year-olds, which she described as a "critical age group."

"We have a lot of great efforts, but we still have problems," Sprague said.