

## **Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention: Help Stop the Problem**

Dear Barry County Community:

Prescription drug abuse is on the rise in Michigan, especially amongst Michigan teens. The latest research from the Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP) indicates Michigan has one of the nation's highest rates of teen prescription drug abuse. A national trend indicates rising numbers of people are using prescription drugs to get high instead of illicit, illegal "street" drugs like cocaine, marijuana, or speed.

Teens, and adults alike, often wrongly believe prescription drugs are a safer alternative to getting high on street drugs.

There isn't a negative stigma attached to prescription drugs like there is to meth, cocaine, marijuana or other "street" drugs. Because doctors prescribe these medications, many people incorrectly believe no harm can come from taking them. In reality, many prescription drugs can be habit-forming, addictive, and even life-threatening.

Prescription drugs may be more readily accessible than "illegal" drugs. Doctors prescribe legitimate medication for healing, but these drugs can easily fall into the wrong hands and be used for the wrong reasons. Youth today have heard about the effects of prescription and over-the-counter drugs and are curious to try them. These drugs, when used incorrectly, are highly addictive and the potential for abuse is high. They are often as close as our kitchen cupboards, medicine cabinets, and bathroom closets. One or two pills are not often missed, but may be enough to begin the cycle of abuse and addiction.

Prescription drugs and over the counter (OTC) medications are only safe when used as directed by a doctor or pharmacist. A major issue leading to abuse of both prescription and OTC meds is the increased likelihood of over-medicating which can and often does lead to overdose. An individual may think if one pill makes them feel better, what effect will 2 or 3 pills have? While the extreme risk linked to taking more than directed is overdose resulting in loss of consciousness or death, the potential for abuse and development of addiction is present at all times.

Here is some information from the Office of National Drug Control Policy National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign:

- Teens are abusing prescription drugs to get high. Data indicates that new users of prescription drugs have caught up with the new users of marijuana.
- Teens incorrectly believe the myth that prescription drugs provide a medically "safe" high.
- The majority of teens report getting prescription drugs easily and for free, often from friends or relatives. The internet also provides "too-easy" access to drugs and drug-related information and culture.
- Pain relievers such as Oxycontin and Vicodin are the most commonly abused prescription drugs by teens.
- Adolescents are more likely than adults to become addicted to prescription drugs.

Prescription drug abuse is a growing problem for youth and adults alike. Here are a few tips to help prevent the problem:

- Educate yourself and your family, especially youth, about the risks. Talk to your children and grandchildren about the serious dangers of all drugs.
- Keep track of quantities. Take note of how many pills are in a bottle or packet. If you have to refill medications more often than recommended, there is the chance someone is stealing your medication.
- Talk to friends and relatives. Make sure everybody gets educated about the risks of prescription drug abuse. Encourage others to monitor their medicine cabinets and pill bottles.
- Lock up controlled substances. Prescription pain-killers, narcotics, and other types of medication may be best protected by being in a locked location.
- Follow directions carefully. Use all medications only as directed and as needed. Never take more than the prescribed or recommended dosage. Call your doctor or pharmacist with any questions about your medications.
- Discard old and unused medications. Before throwing them in the trash, remove the personalized label from the bottles. Add coffee grounds or kitty litter to old medications to make them undesirable. If possible, take your medications to a hazardous waste pick up site for proper disposal. **DO NOT FLUSH MEDICATIONS DOWN THE TOILET OR DRAIN!** Chemicals in medication can taint our water supply.
- Monitor your teen's time on the internet. Check out the history of the websites visited and look at the sites your kids are looking at. Ask questions and learn how to use the internet if you don't already. Block sites and limit time on the internet. There are many drug information sites as well as social networking sites where kids have access to harmful information.
- Be observant. If you notice unusual behavior in your kids or family members, ask questions. Seek professional help sooner rather than later.

There are many websites with helpful information to help us all prevent the growing problem of prescription drug abuse. Visit these sites for good information:

- [www.theantidrug.com](http://www.theantidrug.com)
- [www.theantidrug.com/E-Monitoring/index.asp](http://www.theantidrug.com/E-Monitoring/index.asp)
- [www.drugabuse.gov](http://www.drugabuse.gov)
- [www.theantidrug.com/drug\\_info/prescription\\_411.asp](http://www.theantidrug.com/drug_info/prescription_411.asp)
- [www.drugfree.org](http://www.drugfree.org)
- [www.barrycountysas.org](http://www.barrycountysas.org)

Please take action to prevent prescription drug abuse. We can all do our part in creating a healthier, safer community.

If you or someone you love has a problem with prescription drugs, over the counter medications, alcohol, marijuana, or any other drug, please call for help today. Barry County Substance Abuse Services is here to help you. Please call 269.945.1387 or toll free 1.877.489.9084.

Thank you for your help in preventing this growing problem.

Barry County Substance Abuse Services