

STUDENT INTERVENTION SERVICES
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March 31, 2011
Bulletin P-13823-CAO/SLE



Contact Person:

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TO: All Principals

FROM: Judith Klinek, Chief Academic Office

SUBJECT: PRESCRIPTION AND OVER THE COUNTER (OTC) DRUG **ABUSE**

Abuse of prescription and OTC drugs is an epidemic and of great concern all across our country, with life threatening consequences.

We know that most of our students do not use drugs, including alcohol. The message that most of our students are drug-free is important because it helps set the norm for drug-free behavior. We do not normalize the problem by implying that all teens are abusing these drugs.

The majority of teens who abuse prescription drugs get them easily and for free, primarily from friends and relatives. Many parents are not aware of teen prescription drug abuse. Teenagers report that their parents do not discuss these dangers with them, even though research shows that parental disapproval is a powerful way to keep teens drug-free (Office of Drug Control Policy, 2008). Some teens are also abusing some OTC cough and cold remedies to get high.

Our own students report the following.

Drugs Used:	Ages 10-14 Life time	Ages 10-14 Past 30 days	Age 15-17 Life time	Ages 15-17 Past 30 days
Depressants without doctor's orders	2.3%	0.8%	7.2%	2.4%
Prescription Pain Relievers without doctor's orders	2.9%	1.4%	6.8%	1.6%
Prescription Amphetamines without doctor's orders	1.5%	0.9%	3.8%	1.5%
Over the Counter Medication to get high	4.4%	2.8%	5.7%	1.8%

(2010 Florida Youth Substance Abuse Survey Palm Beach Report)

<http://www.dcf.state.fl.us/oroerans/samh/publications/fvsas/2010Survey/Palm%20Beachli.pdf>

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PRESCRIPTION AND OVER THE COUNTER (OTC) DRUG ABUSE

An average of seven persons die every day in Florida because of lethal overdoses from the illegal, non-medical misuse of one or more prescription drugs (FDLE Medical Examiners Commission 2010).

Nationally:

- Every day 2,500 youth age 12 to 17 abuse a pain reliever for the very first time.
- Among 12- and 13-year-olds, prescription drugs are the drug of choice (SAMHSA 2008).
- Painkillers are one of the most commonly abused drugs by teens after tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana.
- Abusing prescription drugs is illegal -- and that includes sharing prescriptions with friends.
- Taking just one large dose of an opioid (painkiller) can cause severe breathing complications or death. Combining opioids with drugs that cause drowsiness (depressants) can also lead to death.
- High doses of a stimulant (such as Adderall or Ritalin) can cause an irregular heartbeat, dangerously high body temperatures, and the potential for heart failure or seizures.

The academic consequences of drug use, which include absenteeism, lower grades, disruptive behaviors, suspensions, and below grade-level test scores, pose a significant and severe problem for the entire school community.

We are providing you with this information because it is a national, state, and local epidemic. Please share this information with your parents and staff so that current and accurate information can be presented and discussed with your students.

Please see the attached *Preventing Prescription Drug Abuse* information sheet and consider sending it to parents in hard copy or on Edline. For more information, a *Teen, Prescription, and Over the Counter Drugs* flyer and a PowerPoint from the Substance Abuse Program Office are located on the Department of Safe Schools Website http://www.palmbeachschools.org/safe_schools/safeschggj_s.asp.

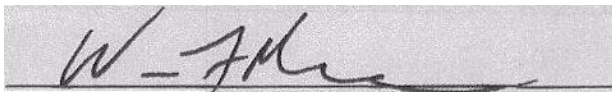
In addition, here is a link to *Teens and Prescription Drug Abuse*

[http://www.theantidrug.com/pdfs/TEENS AND PRESCRIPTION DRUGS.pdf](http://www.theantidrug.com/pdfs/TEENS_AND_PRESCRIPTION_DRUGS.pdf).

Our nationally recognized program FACE IT⁵, for students who violate drug possession and use policies, is also available for students and parents who volunteer for the program. Narcotic Overdose Prevention Education (NOPE) Task Force has an assembly program that shows evidence of increasing students' and parents' knowledge and changes attitudes about preventing overdoses, mixing of medications, locking up medications, and dangers of a one-time use. For more information about NOPE, contact Karen Perry, Executive Director, at 561-478-1055.

WFM/JK/AA/KCW/MK/dh

Attachment



Approved:

William F. Malone, Acting Superintendent

Preventing Prescription Drug Abuse

Think about your home. What prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs do you have? Where are they kept? Would you know if some were missing? The good news is that you can take steps immediately to limit access to these drugs and help keep your teen drug-free:

- 1. Safeguard all drugs at home. Monitor quantities and control access.** Take note of how many pills are in a bottle or pill packet, and keep track of refills. This goes for your own medication, as well as for your teen and other members of your household. If you find you have to refill medication more often than expected, there could be a real problem — someone may be taking your medication without your knowledge. If your teen has been prescribed a drug, be sure you control the medication, and
.. monitor dosages and refills.
- 2. Set clear rules for teens about all drug use, including not sharing medicine and always following the medical provider's advice and dosages.** Make sure your teen uses prescription drugs only as directed by a medical provider and follows instructions for OTC products carefully. This includes taking the proper dosage and not using with other substances without a medical provider's approval. Teens should never take prescription or OTC drugs with street drugs or alcohol. If you have any questions about how to take a drug, call your family physician or pharmacist.
- 3. Be a good role model by following these same rules with your own medicines.** Examine your own behavior to ensure you set a good example. If you misuse your prescription drugs, such as share them with your kids, or abuse them, your teen will take notice- Avoid sharing your drugs and always follow your medical provider's instructions.
- 4. Properly conceal and dispose of old or unneeded medicines in the trash.** Unneeded prescription drugs should be hidden and throw" away in the trash. So that teens or others don't take them out of the trash, you can mix them with an undesirable substance (like used coffee grounds or kitty litter) and put the mixture in an empty can or bag. Unless the directions say otherwise, do NOT flush medications down the drain or toilet because the chemicals can pollute the water supply. Also, remove any personal, identifiable information from prescription bottles or pill packages before you throw them away.
- 5. Ask friends and family to safeguard their prescription drugs as well.** Make sure your friends and relatives, especially grandparents, know about the risks, too, and encourage them to regularly monitor their own medicine cabinets. If there are other households your teen has access to, talk to those families as well about the importance of safeguarding medications. If you don't know the parents of your child's friends, then make an effort to get to know them, and get on the same page about rules and expectations for use of all drugs, including alcohol and illicit drugs. Follow up with your teen's school administration to find out what they are doing to address issues of prescription and OTC drug abuse in schools.

Talk to your teen about the dangers of abusing prescription and OTC drugs. These are powerful drugs that, when abused, can be just as dangerous as street drugs. Tell your teen the risks far outweigh any "benefits."

Sponsored by The National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign