



CLAAD

Center for Lawful Access
and Abuse Deterrence

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Prescription Drug Abuse Poses Threat to Students Parents and Teachers Cannot Handle This Problem Alone

September 9, 2010 – Washington, DC – Parents and teachers need to know the warning signs of prescription drug abuse as students from elementary schools to universities go back to school this month. But they are not the only ones who must take action to address prescription drug abuse, according to a national alliance of families, medical professionals, law enforcement, and drug abuse prevention advocates.

“Rising rates of prescription drug abuse are the result of a combination of factors and can only be countered successfully by a coordinated, multi-sector strategy,” said Michael Barnes, a spokesperson for the Center for Lawful Access and Abuse Deterrence, or CLAAD.

Teens are abusing prescription medications, often believing the myth that they provide a “safe high.” Parents, teachers, coaches, and friends all need to be aware of the warning signs for prescription drug abuse, especially by teens and young adults. They are:

- . Changes in attitude, sleeping habits, or appetite
- . Curfew violations or missing school, practice, or work
- . Lack of personal grooming
- . Slurred speech
- . Possession of drug paraphernalia

“Spread the word: One pill can kill,” said April Rovero, founder of the National Coalition Against Prescription Drug Abuse. Her organization has partnered with CLAAD to address the systemic changes that are needed to stem the tide of prescription drug abuse nationwide.

A White House study has confirmed a 400 percent spike nationwide in prescription drug abuse between 1998 and 2008. Controlling the abuse of prescription medications is complicated by the need to keep such medications available for lawful use by patients and prescribers.

CLAAD’s 2010 *National Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Strategy* sets forth a number of recommendations directed to multiple sectors of society to address the challenge of ensuring the availability of prescription medications while preventing their abuse, including:

- . **Federal Government:** Update Food and Drug Administration policies and labeling standards to speed the development and use of medications introducing limits to abuse;

and revise current law to provide safe and convenient consumer options for the disposal of unused medications.

- . **States:** Optimize electronic prescription monitoring programs and require health care providers to use them.
- . **Pharmaceutical companies:** Develop new formulations and dispensing mechanisms to deter the abuse of their products;
- . **Health care providers:** Exercise precautions in prescribing, test for substance abuse as part of standard clinical examinations, and refer patients to treatment when necessary.
- . **Pharmacists:** Confirm each prescription is legitimate before dispensing medications, and counsel patients on safe use and storage.
- . **Patients:** Use medications only as prescribed, secure them to prevent theft, and never share or sell them.

The *National Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Strategy* was drafted after consultations with more than 40 invested groups and experts, who convened in December 2009. Twenty-five not-for-profit health and safety organizations and professional associations have endorsed the *Strategy*.

A full copy of CLAAD's recommendations can be found at <http://CLAAD.org>.

"The prevention and treatment strategies set forth in this document are practical and achievable," said Andrea Barthwell, M.D., CEO of Two Dreams Outer Banks, an addiction recovery program. "Pharmaceutical companies have an obligation to make their products safer, patients must safeguard and never share their medications, and health care providers must routinely test for abuse and make referrals to treatment."

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About the Center for Lawful Access and Abuse Deterrence

The primary objective of the Center for Lawful Access and Abuse Deterrence (CLAAD) is to coordinate a comprehensive national effort to prevent the diversion, misuse, and abuse of prescription medications while ensuring adequate medical care for patients in need. CLAAD enables health professionals, law enforcement, businesses, and government, among many other entities, to share resources and work together to prevent the diversion, misuse, and abuse of medications.

Sources:

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<http://claad.org/>

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