



Mental Health and Recovery Services Board

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PRESS RELEASE

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Spring Cleaning of Medications written by Robin B. Reaves, LPCCs

As many of us look at spring as a time to refresh and clean up the clutter and disorganization in our homes, I would like to bring attention to a very important task involving medications. I would like to share information that I received from The Drug Free Action Alliance on the storing and disposing of medications.

Families are continuing to be devastated and destroyed as children end up in the ER, become addicted, suffer physical pain and emotional turmoil, and some lose their lives altogether - all in the name of prescription drug abuse. Medicine abuse among youth continues to trend at an alarming rate and for what? According to youth, they use to get high, treat pain, sleep, stay awake, fit in or do better in school. And the majority say they can get these drugs easily and for free, from unknowing, unsuspecting family members and friends through unlocked medicine cabinets.

The most commonly abused prescription drugs fall into three categories: Painkillers, Depressants and Stimulants. Because so much attention, nationwide, has been drawn to the dangers of prescription pain pills (and rightfully so), many people are now aware of the hazards they present and are hopefully more vigilant in keeping them properly stored and monitored. However, many people are not aware of the risks other prescription and over-the-counter drugs, and how common the abuse of these Doctor-prescribed stimulant medications used to treat anxiety, for instance, are common drugs of abuse, as well as doctor-prescribed depressants, like sleep medications. Young people typically abuse stimulants to stay awake or get ramped up for a night of partying, while depressants may be later used to then come back down, help users relax or to induce sleep.

Some teens are known to grab pills from home, or from the homes of relatives and friends, not knowing what they are or what they do, with the intention of taking them to teen "Skittles" parties, where everyone brings pills, dumps them in a bowl, and pops them in their mouths like candy. In this situation, users have no idea what they're ingesting or the side effects that might accompany any one particular pill, let alone the outcome of mixing with alcohol or multiple other drugs.

Then there's cough medicine; the sticky, syrupy stuff that most children turn their nose up to when they're actually sick, because of the bitter taste... both the prescription strength that contains codeine, as well as the over-the-counter version that contains DXM, are both being abused by teens. Mixed typically with sprite (or other soda) and a Jolly Rancher, this nasty-tasting medicine, often referred to as *Purple Drank*, *Syrup*, *Sizzurp* and *Lean* (because it literally causes users to lean over), becomes a candy-flavored cocktail that produces a relaxed, euphoric high, when taken in high doses.

ADHD medicines are also popular drugs of abuse among youth, frequently being abused for purposes of weight loss or academic performance enhancement. And as youth get older, parents are more

likely to entrust them to handle and self-administer their own medications. But far too often, these pills end up in the hands of unintended users, like friends or classmates.

The side-effects and drug interactions of these medicines can be highly dangerous, and even deadly. It is immensely important for parents, grandparents and other adults to eliminate the ease of access of these drugs by removing medications from nightstands, kitchen cabinets and any other unsecured location, and to then follow these three simple steps:

SECURE: Safeguard all your prescription and over-the-counter medications in a locked cabinet, drawer or safe that is inaccessible to your teens and their friends.

MONITOR: Make note of how many pills or the amount of liquid in each medicine bottle you have in your home. Keep track of refills and be sure you control any medication that is prescribed to your child.

DISPOSE: Take advantage of the many drug drop boxes and drug take-back days that are available in our community.

For information regarding drop box locations or drug disposal guidelines contact our office at 419-448-0640.

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