

CADY CORNER

Contributor: Deb Naro

October is “National Medicine Abuse Awareness Month”

The good news is that teens are turning away from street drugs.

While this is true, there’s a new threat from the family medicine cabinet – the abuse of prescription (Rx) and over-the-counter (OTC) drugs.

According to the National Survey on Drug Use and Health, in 2008, there were 2.5 million people, aged 12 or older who used prescription medicines non-medically for the first time within the past year, averaging out to around 7,000 new users per day. And according to the National Institute on Drug Abuse’s Monitoring the Future Survey, 4 percent of 8th graders, 5 percent of 10th graders, and 7 percent of 12th graders reported having abused medicines containing the cough suppressant DXM in 2005 to get high. The Partnership for a Drug-Free America found that one in 10 teenagers – or about 2.4 million young people – reported having abused cough medicine to get high.

In 2009, the U.S. Senate designated October as “National Medicine Abuse Awareness Month.” This came after recent studies unveiled escalating rates of prescription drug abuse and high rates of dextromethorphan (DXM - the active ingredient in OTC cough medicine) abuse among young people. Parents and stakeholders are encouraged to educate themselves and talk to their teens about the dangers associated with medicine abuse.

Parents and caregivers are the first line of defense in addressing these troubling trends. That’s where community coalitions come in. CADY assists and encourages parents and caregivers to seek out information and start discussions now with your local anti-drug abuse advocates, substance abuse treatment experts, healthcare professionals and policy makers to talk about the facts and craft prevention and intervention strategies to address this troubling trend.

To support parents in this effort, CADY offers a wide variety of literature and information easily accessible at our office and through our web site at www.cadyinc.org. Links to additional sites offering prevention materials and educational information are also available through www.cadyinc.org. Be sure to visit www.StopMedicineAbuse.org and Parents, The Anti-Drug web site. You’ll find drug information; parenting advice; signs and symptoms (Is your teen using?); resources; news; and partner information.

CADY is also working to educate the community about the sources of the prescription medicines that are being abused. Senior citizens are often targeted in prescription drug thefts. In fact, 70% of persons age 12 and older who abuse prescription pain killers say they get them from a relative or friend. CADY, along with local police departments will be hosting educational forums at three regional senior centers during the month of

October to help seniors learn about ways to keep themselves, their loved ones and their prescriptions safe.

For more information about the senior prescription education forums, or to get information about how to talk with your family about this serious issue, contact CADY (Communities for Alcohol- and Drug-free Youth) at 536-9793, visit their web site at www.cadyinc.org or stop by our office at 94 Highland Street in Plymouth.

####