Important Information for Parents

Regarding Prescription Pain Medication and Heroin

Facts

There is no greater influence on a young person's decisions about drug use than his/her own parents or guardians. To successfully keep kids drug-free, parents must provide active support and positive role-modeling.

Parents are key in preventing drug use. Be a parent, not a friend. Establish boundaries that take a clear stand against drug use.

Nationally, one in five teens has taken prescription drugs without a doctor's prescription one or more times in their life. *(MMWR June 8, 2012)*

Between 2007 and 2012, the number of individuals using heroin during the past 30 days more than doubled nationwide (161,000 to 335,000). *(NSDUH 2012)*

Current brain research shows that the brain is not fully developed until the mid-20s. Adding chemicals to a developing brain is a very risky endeavor—and one that can lead to health problems and places kids at high risk for addiction, even death.

The percentage of New York State high school students who reported using heroin more than doubled between 2005 and 2011 (1.8 % to 4%). *(Youth Risk Behavior Survey (YRBS))*

You Should Know

- The majority of both teens and young adults obtain prescription drugs they abuse from friends and relatives, sometimes without their knowledge.
- Despite what many teens think, abusing prescription drugs is not safer than misusing illicit drugs.
- Prescription drugs can be addictive and lethal when misused.
- Prescription painkillers can lead to heroin use.
- Combining prescription drugs/over-the-counter medications and alcohol can cause respiratory failure and death.
- In 2011, nonmedical use of prescription drugs among youth ages 12 - 17 and young adults ages 18 - 25 was the second most prevalent illicit drug use category, with marijuana being first. *(NSDUH 2011)*

Why Teens Use

Acceptance
Teens use to fit in with friends, to become popular, or to be where the action is.

Curiosity
Youth hear about "highs" and want to find out for themselves.

Easy Access
If pills are easy to obtain, available within a household and not monitored, they are more likely to be used inappropriately.

Modeling
When parents or older siblings use alcohol, drugs and/or tobacco, youth are more likely to try.

Self-medication
To cope with pressures or problems or as an antidote to deal with issues. Medication is intended only for the person for whom it was prescribed. Never share medications. Misuse can lead to addiction and death.

COMBAT HEROIN & Prescription Drug Abuse

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www.combatheroin.ny.gov

Take Action

When you suspect your child may be using heroin or inappropriately using prescription painkillers, it is important to take action.

Prepare Yourself
Work with what happened rather than why it happened. Don't blame someone else, yourself or your child. Don't be shocked or judgmental, because there are many innovative ways to conceal use. Don't be afraid and/or hesitate to investigate your son/daughter's belongings such as cell phones, computers, etc.

Confront the Issue
Don't let anger or fear overwhelm your effectiveness in dealing with your child. Cool down or take a walk before you begin the conversation.

Have a Conversation
Putting your head in the sand is counterproductive. Accept that your son/daughter may be using so you can begin the conversation.

Set Standards
Take a stand. Say "NO" clearly and firmly. Carry through on consequences.

Ask For Help
There are many confidential resources available for parents—if you ask! Ask your school health professional for help, or seek assistance from a mental health or substance abuse counselor.

Signs and Symptoms

Any one of the following behaviors can be a symptom of normal adolescence. However, keep in mind that the key is change. It is important to note any significant changes in a child's physical appearance, personality, attitude or behavior.

Physical Signs
- Loss or increase in appetite; unexplained weight loss or gain
- Small pupils, decreased respiratory rate and a non-responsive state are all signs of opioid intoxication.
- Nausea, vomiting, sweating, shaky hands, feet or head, and large pupils are all signs of opioid withdrawal.

Behavioral Signs
- Change in attitude/personality
- Change in friends; new hangouts
- Avoiding contact with family
- Change in activities, hobbies or sports
- Drop in grades or work performance
- Isolation and secretive behavior
- Moodiness, irritability, nervousness, giddiness, nodding off
- Wearing long-sleeved shirts or layers of clothing out of season
- Stealing

Advanced Warning Signs
- Missing medications
- Burnt or missing spoons/ bottle caps
- Missing shoelaces/belts
- Small bags with powder residue
- Syringes

The following organizations offer information and resources that can help you and your family.

1-877-8-HOPENY
Find Help for 1-877-846-7369
Alcoholism, Drug Abuse, Problem Gambling

OASAS Improving Lives. New York State Office of Alcoholism and Substance Abuse Services
www.oasas.ny.gov

NEW YORK state department of HEALTH New York State Department of Health
www.health.ny.gov

COMBAT HEROIN & Prescription Drug Abuse www.combatheroin.ny.gov

Widely Used Drugs

Prescription Painkillers | Heroin | Marijuana | Alcohol | Tobacco