



Department of Justice

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NEW YORK STATE
OFFICE OF ALCOHOLISM & SUBSTANCE ABUSE SERVICES
Addiction Services for Prevention, Treatment, Recovery



PRESCRIPTION DRUGS - NOW THE MOST COMMONLY ABUSED DRUGS AMONG YOUNG TEENS

Albany, New York – United States Attorney Richard S. Hartunian announced today that he has joined with the Partnership at Drugfree.org to promote its national campaign entitled the ‘Medicine Abuse Project’ which begins on Sept. 23, 2012. Mr. Hartunian was joined by a number of officials, including district attorneys, police chiefs, sheriffs, the New York State Police, the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) and Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), school superintendents and state agencies, all emphasizing the need to address abuse of prescription drugs by teens.

To assist in this effort, the U.S. Attorney’s Office is presenting a state-wide educational webinar, “Prescription Drug Abuse: NOT What the Doctor Ordered!,” in coordination with the Capital Region Board of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) broadcasting on Friday, Sept. 28 from 1 – 2 PM. The primary focus of the webinar is to educate communities, schools and agencies about the dangers of abusing prescription and over-the-counter medicines, while providing viewers with the tools and strategies to address prescription drug abuse. For more information on the webinar, please visit the U.S. Attorney’s web site at <http://www.justice.gov/usao/nyn/> or the New York State OASAS Facebook page. The webinar is free and open to all.

As part of this effort, the DEA is coordinating their fifth annual “National Take Back Day” focusing on the safe disposal of unused prescription drugs in special Drop Boxes located at police departments nationwide. This year’s “National Take Back Day” is on Sept. 29, 2012. A list of local Drop Box

locations is included with the press release. It's an opportunity for the general public to safely dispose of unused, unneeded and expired prescription drugs. To date the, agency has recovered 1.5 million pounds of unused prescription drugs from the public.

DEA's Acting Special Agent in Charge Wilbert L. Plummer stated, "This 'Take Back' initiative is a priority to keep our community drug free. Prescription drug abuse has been on the rise in the past few years because people have access to neighbors, relatives and friends' medicine cabinets. This initiative is to properly and safely dispose of unwanted, unused and expired medications, getting them out of reach of those who are not the person that has the prescription."

New York State Police Superintendent Joseph A. D'Amico said, "Prescription drug abuse is a major concern. It's impressive to see our Federal, state and local law enforcement and community partners working together to educate and inform the public on the dangers of prescription drugs. The State Police proudly joins these efforts by allowing citizens the means to safely dispose of unused and unwanted prescription drugs at our Troop headquarters located throughout the state."

United States Attorney Hartunian said, "The serious dangers of prescription drug abuse are not fully understood by many until it is too late. We have an obligation to alert parents and the public at large of the dangers associated with the drugs in our family medicine cabinets. We are pleased to join with the Drug Enforcement Administration, the New York State Police, The Partnership at Drugfree.org and all our local partners to better educate the public about this nationwide problem."

The New York State Association of School Nurses is committed to enhancing the educational success of students. The growing numbers of school aged children affected by the abuse of prescription medications is cause for concern and heightened awareness. School nurses provide education and prevention strategies to individual students and school communities. As a school and community resource, school nurses are often the first contact that identifies a potential problem with a student who may be in need for interventions to be healthy, safe and ready to learn at school.

Significantly notable are the number of agencies who are making the prevention of prescription drug abuse a priority. "The wide variety of law enforcement agencies and others who join us in working to reduce and prevent this abuse, which is reaching epidemic proportions, is essential. It is through such combined efforts that we will be able to keep the next young person from taking the tragic steps of abusing a prescription drug. We need everyone's involvement," said Mr. Hartunian.

"We are deeply grateful to the United States Attorneys' Offices around the nation for joining this collaborative Project to effectively address the intentional abuse of prescription and over-the-counter cough medicine," said Steve Pasierb, President and CEO of The Partnership at Drugfree.org. "The U.S. Department of Justice has been an active supporter of our innovative community-based prevention programs. Forging new relationships with partners in the federal criminal justice community is a significant strategic step forward as we build a sustained public/private initiative. The influential voice of U.S. Attorneys' Offices will help greatly in educating parents and teens about the significant and largely underestimated risks of medicine abuse."

For more information on the national campaign, please visit the website for the Partnership at Drugfree.org and its Medicine Abuse Project.