



Partners with Local Coalitions in Reducing Underage Drinking & Prescription Drug Abuse

By **KARI GABRIEL**

To get the message to parents about the importance of paying attention to underage drinking, Flathead CARE partnered with the STOP Underage Drinking in the Flathead Coalition when it was organized in 2005. We recently partnered with a brand new coalition, the STOP Prescription Drug Abuse in the Flathead Coalition, created in 2014. Together, we produce a series of postcard reminders, theater ads, billboards, and social media messages that are directed to parents of teens. Parents are encouraged to:



Set and enforce standards for their teens by letting them know that underage drinking and illegal drug use is unacceptable in their family;

Set a good example of healthy living;

Become interested and involved in their teen's activities;

Know their teens friends and families;

Set clear rules, boundaries and curfews;

Never sponsor an unsupervised party, and do not let their teen attend one – provide safe chaperoned alternatives;

Call parents who are hosting parties to assure there will not be any drinking or drug use;

Ask for help for their teen if they believe he/she has a problem with alcohol or illegal drugs;

For ten years, the STOP Underage Drinking in the Flathead Coalition has delivered the message that parents have much more influence on their children than they think. They watch what you do and adopt your values. Even though they pretend that they aren't listening.... They are!

Every day, nationwide, 2,500 teenagers begin abusing prescription drugs to get high or to help them with a specific problem, such as lessening anxiety, staying awake to study, or losing weight. Each year prescription drug abuse contributes to the death of more than 300 Montanans, and Montana teens report the third highest rate of prescription drug abuse in the nation. Additionally, 18-percent of Montana's Middle and High School students report abusing prescription drugs.

Another depressing statistic in Montana involves drunk driving. Of all driving fatalities under the age of 21, 33.3-percent involve alcohol impaired drivers (nationally, it's 25-percent). Even Montana drivers over the age of 21 involved in fatal car wrecks, a whopping 40.6-percent include drunk drivers. These are not stats to be proud of in Montana.... What are we teaching our kids?

Teens are accessing prescription drugs most frequently from a home medicine cabinet or from a friend or family member. Even though they can be just as deadly, prescription drugs don't hold the same stigma as illegal recreation drugs, leading teens to regard them as a "safe" way to get high.

Some of the most frequently abused prescription drugs by teens are:

Stimulants (Ritalin and Adderall) to give them additional energy and ability to focus when they are studying or taking tests – One in 10 teens has abused stimulants;

Narcotic pain relievers (Oxycodone, Oxy-Contin, Percocet, Roxanol, Lortab and Vicodin) to get high and possibly relieve minor aches and pains. These drugs are highly addictive if abused and misused – One in six teens has abused a narcotic pain reliever;

Sedatives and tranquilizers (Xanax, Valium, Seconal and Ativan) to help them cope with academic, social or emotional stress – Among 12th graders, one in 11 has abused sedatives and tranquilizers.

This list does not cover all the prescription drugs that may cause harmful consequences to our youth. A more complete and detailed list, entitled "Prescription and Over-the-Counter Drug Guide: A parent's guide to the legal drugs kids are using and abusing," may be obtained at www.thepartnershipatdrugfree.org. This guide provides known side effects, street names, how it is used, and signs of abuse.

The risks of your teens misusing and abusing prescription drugs are both immediate and long-term. Immediate concerns include overdosing (especially on prescription pain relievers) which can be fatal, as can mixing prescription drugs with over-the-counter medication and/or alcohol. Over the long-term, prescription opioids (pain relievers) are potentially addictive and can lead to a lifelong pattern of dependency. Teen misuse and abuse of prescription drugs (as well as

marijuana and alcohol) can adversely affect youth brain development, which may impact your teen's education and employment potential. It also can lead to serious problems for teens, such as impaired driving accidents, criminal mischief and truancy, to name just a few.

So, what can parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, community members, educators, business owners, and community leaders do to help our teens from misusing and abusing prescription drugs and alcohol?

MONITOR the medication that is in your household. Make note of how many pills are in each of your prescription bottles; keep track of your refills. If you find that you need to refill your medication more often than expected, it could indicate a problem.

SAFEGUARD your prescription medicine by keeping it in a secure place. Teens abuse prescription drugs because they are easily accessible, and are either free or inexpensive. Approach securing your prescriptions the same way you would other valuables in your home, like jewelry, cash and firearms.

DISPOSE of your expired or unused prescription drugs. Do not flush medication down the drain or toilet, but mix the prescription drugs with an undesirable substance (such as kitty litter) then put the mixture into an empty can or bag and discard. Better yet, put them all in one Ziploc bag and take them to prescription-drug drop boxes in the lobbies of the Flathead County Sheriff's Office, and the Whitefish and Columbia Falls Police Departments.

EDUCATE yourself about which drugs kids most often abuse, and recognize the signs that your child might be abusing prescription medications, including:

- Loss of interest in appearance, sports or social activities.
- Cash, valuables or medication missing from the home.
- Sudden mood changes.
- Changes in friends.
- Deceitful and secretive behavior.
- Irregular schedule.
- Sleeping excessively or at atypical times.
- Noticeable increase in snoring.

SPREAD THE WORD. Once you've become informed, talk to family members, neighbors, and the parents of your children's friends, and encourage them to safeguard their medications. Share information at Parent-Teacher Association meetings or other groups where parents gather.

SET CLEAR STANDARDS and expectations around ALL types of substance abuse, including abuse of prescription medications. Family rules about drugs AND underage drinking give kids something to fall back on when they are tempted to make poor decisions.

Think your family is immune to prescription drug abuse? Try these stats on for size:

Prescription medicines are now the most commonly abused drugs among 12- to 13-year-olds. *NSDUH 2012

More Americans die from drug overdoses than in car crashes, and this increasing trend is driven by Rx painkillers. *CDC

More people die from abusing prescription pain relievers than cocaine and heroin combined. *CDC

Ninety-percent of addictions start in the teen years. *2012 CASA Columbia

Nine million teens surveyed say they can get prescription drugs in a day. *thepartnershipatdrugfree.com

One in 10 teens has abused Adderall or Ritalin. *thepartnershipatdrugfree.com

Twenty-percent of teens report buying pain relievers from a friend or relative, or taking the drug from a friend or relative without asking. *Rx report from Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2007.

The Streets Aren't The Only Place Kids Find Drugs



Sometimes They Find Them Right At Home. Who's In Your Medicine Cabinet?

Let's all work together to prevent prescription drug abuse and the tragic consequences it causes, including addiction, overdoses, impaired driving and even death.

For more information about this nationwide epidemic, and signs and symptoms of substance abuse, contact:

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Do you know the street names for the Rx drugs that are now the most commonly abused drugs among teens?

Amphetamine (AKA: Bennies, Black Beauties, Crosses) – These create a stimulant that mimics the effect adrenaline has on the body. Amphetamines may be prescribed for the treatment of ADHD and a sleep disorder called narcolepsy. **BRAND/COMMERCIAL NAMES:** Biphedamine®, Dexedrine®, Adderall®, Concerta®

Barbiturates (AKA: Barbs, Block Busters) – These are central nervous system depressants that slow down the mind and body, causing drowsiness and sleepiness. **BRAND/COMMERCIAL NAMES:** Amytal®, Nembutal®, Seconal®, Phenobarbital, Tuinal

Benzodiazepines (AKA: Sticks, BenZ, Footballs, Bars) – These are among the most commonly prescribed depressant medications in the United States today. More than 15 different types of benzodiazepine medications exist. They are prescribed for relaxation, calmness, and relief from anxiety and tension. Some benzodiazepines are commonly used to treat seizures or insomnia, but other more uncommon conditions too. **BRAND/COMMERCIAL NAME:** Ativan®, Halcion®, Librium®, Valium®, Xanax®

Codeine (AKA: T3s, AC/DC, Coties, Orange Crush, Triple C's, C-C-C, Red Devils, Skittles, Dex, Vitamin D, Robo, Robo-Trippin, Robo-Dosing) – This is a prescription pain reliever that may be used to relieve mild to moderate pain, and to reduce coughing when used in combination with other medications. **BRAND/COMMERCIAL NAMES:** (Limited selection as there are more than 50 brand names of codeine alone and in-combination with other medications) Brontex®, Capital and Codeine®, Fiorinal® with Codeine (as a combination product containing Codeine Phosphate, Aspirin, Butabarbital, and Caffeine), Guiatussin® with Codeine, Mytussin® AC Cough Syrup, Robafen AC® Syrup, Robitussin A-C® Syrup, Tussi-Organidin®-S NR, Tylenol with Codeine (No. 2, No. 3, No. 4)®

Dextromethorphan (DXM) (AKA: Orange Crush) – This is an ingredient found in any cold medicine with the “DM” or “TUSS” in the title or name. In fact, DXM is in almost half of all of the OTC drugs sold in the United States, making it easy to get, cheap and legal.

BRAND/COMMERCIAL NAMES: Any Cold Medicine with “DM” or “TUSS” in the title such as: Dimetapp DM®, Nyquil®, Robitussin®, Theraflu®, Vick's Formula 44®

Fentanyl (AKA: Apache, China Girl, Patches, Dance Fever) – This is a powerful reliever typically used to treat severe pain or pain after surgery. **BRAND/COMMERCIAL NAMES:** Actiq®, Fentora®, Duragesic®, Sublimaze®

Flunitrazepam (AKA: R-2, Mexican Valium, Rophies, Roofies, Circle) – It is prescribed to treat insomnia or given prior to anesthesia. It is a derivative of Benzodiazepine. It is not available in the United States, but is available in 60 other countries. **BRAND/COMMERCIAL NAMES:** Rohypnol

Hydrocodone Bitartrate (AKA: Vike, Watson-387, Hydro) – This drug is often combined with acetaminophen (which increases the effect of the hydrocodone) to relieve moderate to severe pain. In the United States there are more than 200 products containing hydrocodone with acetaminophen (Vicodin, Lortab). Hydrocodone is also combined with aspirin (Lortab ASA), ibuprofen (Vicoprofen) and antihistamines (Hycomine). **BRAND/COMMERCIAL NAMES:** Hcocodan®, Lorcet®, Lortab®, Vicodin®, Vicoprofen®, Tussionex®, Norco®

Methylphenidate (AKA: JIF, MPH, R-ball, Skippy) – It's the most commonly prescribed central nervous stimulant used to treat ADHD. It may also be used to treat a sleep disorder called narcolepsy. **BRAND/COMMERCIAL NAMES:** Ritalin®

Morphine (AKA: M, Miss Emma, Monkey, White Stuff) – This drug is prescribed to relieve moderate to severe pain and is highly addictive. **BRAND/COMMERCIAL NAMES:** Roxanol®, Duramorph®

Oxycodone HCL (AKA: Oxy, O/C, Orange Crush, Oscar) – This drug relieves moderate to severe pain, and can be combined with other medications, including acetaminophen and ibuprofen. **BRAND/COMMERCIAL NAMES:** OxyContin®, Percocet®, Tylox®, Roxicodone®, Roxicet®, Opana

Sources and citations:

www.knowyourdosemt.com • www.resolvemontana.org
www.SafeguardMyMeds.org • www.thepartnershipatdrugfree.org
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