



## CENTRE COUNTY PREVENTION COALITION

*A SAMHSA Funded Drug-Free Community Coalition*

*Supported By Centre County Drug and Alcohol*



### **April 21, 2010 – Prescription Drug Abuse**

Elizabeth Eckley is the Community Mobilizer for Centre County Communities That Care. This weekly column, published on Wednesdays, is a collaboration of Centre County *Communities That Care* serving Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola Area School Districts, and Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care* serving the State College Area School District.

Although illicit drug use and abuse among teens is declining; now there's a growing threat from the family medicine cabinet. Approximately, 2,500 youth ages 12 to 17 abuse a pain reliever for the very first time every day. More teens abuse prescription drugs than any illicit drug except marijuana. According to the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration, more than 2.1 million youth ages 12 to 17 reported abusing prescription drugs. In fact, it has been reported that among 12 and 13 year olds, prescription drugs are their drug of choice.

Because prescription drugs are so readily available, 70 percent of youth report getting them from friends or relatives, youth who wouldn't otherwise touch illicit drugs consider the abuse of prescription drugs. Even though youth report that parental disapproval is a powerful tool to keep them from using drugs, many report that their caregivers are not talking about the dangers of prescription drugs with them.

To help caregivers talk to their youth about the dangers of prescription drug use and abuse, there is some basic information that caregivers should know. Prescription drugs abuse is most readily seen in these forms: painkillers, depressants, stimulants and cough and cold remedies.

Painkillers are those drugs usually prescribed after surgery or for those with chronic pain. Depressants are most commonly those prescriptions related to anti-anxiety and sleeping. Stimulants are represented in prescriptions such as those for attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Cough and cold remedies such as cough syrup, are also commonly used and offered over-the-counter.

These drugs, like illicit drugs, have serious health risks when abused. A single large dose of prescription drug or over-the-counter painkillers or depressants can cause breathing difficulty that can lead to death. Stimulant use can lead to aggressive behavior and paranoia. They can also cause fatal seizures and have the potential to encourage heart system failure. Over-the-counter cough and cold remedies can cause blurred vision, vomiting, dizziness, coma and even death when abused.

Talking to youth and educating them about prescription drug abuse is very important. It is also equally important to safeguard all drugs at home. Make sure to monitor quantities and to control the youth's access. Properly conceal and dispose of old or unused medicines. Also, being a good role model with your own

prescription drug usage also sends a very clear message to your youth. Make sure that you follow the same rules with your own prescription drugs.

If you would like further information on prescription drug use among youth, please feel free to register for the free prescription drug workshop being offered by Centre *County Communities That Care* on Tuesday, April 27<sup>th</sup> from 9:00 am to 11:00 am at the American Philatelic Society. For more information or to register, please e-mail [centrecountyctc@yahoo.com](mailto:centrecountyctc@yahoo.com).

Care Partnership: Centre Region *Communities That Care*

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*Serving the School Districts of Bald Eagle, Bellefonte, Penns Valley, and Philipsburg-Osceola*

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