When thinking about consequences of illicit prescription drug use, worry of addiction and overdose come to mind. However, the widespread and unauthorized use of illicit prescription drugs is affecting the academic performance of children, today.

The 2009 National Risk Behavior Survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control showed a strong correlation between illicit prescription drug use and a decline in academic performance in high school. The use of prescription drug use was correlated to 26% of students achieving a C average and 41% of students who were barely passing or not passing their classes at all.*

“Every day in the United States, an average of 2,000 teenagers use prescription drugs without a doctor’s guidance for the first time. Among youth who are 12 to 17 years old, 2.8% reported past-month nonmedical use of prescription medications.”*

In a recent study, 3% of youth aged 12-17 reported current nonmedical use of prescription medications. ** Teens believe the myth that “if it is prescribed by a doctor, it won’t hurt me,” leaving them to think they can take anyone’s medication and remain safe.

In a 2008 survey conducted by the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy, using prescription drugs illegally ranked second only to marijuana use among teens. 70% of teens get prescription drugs from their own home, other family members or from a friend’s home.

Nonmedical use of prescription and over-the-counter medicines remains a significant part of the teen drug problem. In 2012, 14.8 percent of high-school seniors used a prescription drug nonmedically in the past year. Data for specific drugs show that the most commonly abused prescription drugs by teens are the stimulant Adderall and the pain reliever Vicodin.”***
What Needs To Be Done?

- Provide a safe and open environment in the schools with staff development.
- Invite drug abuse prevention speakers, local law enforcement, treatment providers to update staff on community information on a regular basis.
- Partner with agencies for Red Ribbon week in the schools and community which usually occurs on the last full week of October.
- Support drug abuse prevention education and consider using a school wide drug abuse curriculum. The Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (www.Samhsa.gov) and The National Institute on Drug Abuse (www.drugabuse.gov) provide many resources for school prevention, intervention, and drug abuse curriculum.
- Develop, encourage and support youth-led drug abuse prevention teams in the high schools and middle schools. Involve the student body in positive activities that support abstinence.
- Partner with a local drug abuse prevention agency to start parent drug abuse advocacy groups in the middle and high schools. Collaborate with behavioral health and substance use disorder treatment agencies, juvenile crime prevention councils, and the medical community to keep children out of danger.
- Inform parents of pharmaceutical parties and/or diversion and how to properly monitor and dispose of prescription medications. Develop email lists and other ways to stay connected to parents and staff about prescription drop off events and permanent pill drop boxes. Educate families on the value of proper use and storage of prescription medications.
- Advocate for deferment programs that offer help, treatment and special curriculums targeting intervention, not just punishment or expulsion for drug use.
- Consider parenting classes to empower single, blended, or disengaged families using a structured curriculum.
- Focus on the enhancement of protective factors that reduce substance use. Effective prevention programs involve students, families and the community at large.
- Know what the signs and symptoms of an overdose are: chest pain, difficulty staying awake, shallow or absent breathing, blue or ashen lips, unresponsiveness to stimulation, such as a sternal rub, dizziness, faintness, nausea, vomiting, cold and clammy skin, slowed heart rate, and/or convulsions.
- Check with the school health department to discuss policy and having naloxone, the antidote to an opioid overdose, on site.
- Learn pill recognition and lethal combinations.

Take Correctly, Store Securely, Dispose Properly, Never Share.™

Resources

For more information about the scope of the problem, visit:

- http://www.hhs.gov/ash/oah/adolescent-health-topics/substance-abuse
- http://www.imdrugfree.com/
- https://www.positiveaction.net/

For more information visit projectlazarus.org or call +1.336.667.8100

** Retrieved from http://oas.samhsa.gov/