

KEEP YOUR KIDS

DRUG

ALCOHOL

THC

NICOTINE

JUUL®

LIQUOR

METH

VAPE

MARIJUANA

BOOZE

TOBACCO

POT

SUBSTANCE

FREE

PRESCRIPTION DRUGS

Taking others' prescription drugs is drug abuse, and dangerous.

Know the Risks

Taking prescription drugs that are not prescribed for them, or taking more than prescribed, is a serious and growing problem for youth. Some young people rationalize taking these drugs by thinking, *They're prescribed by a doctor, so they must be safe.* This is FALSE. Prescription drugs can be lethal—they can interact with other medications or substances someone is using without the oversight of a physician and pharmacist. They can also cause an overdose or an allergic reaction, leading to death. Dependence and physical addiction are always a risk. Young people need support and medical oversight to quit.

Know the Facts

- Despite the severe risks, almost **6% of eighth graders** and **7% of twelfth graders** in our region did NOT consider misusing prescription drugs “wrong or very wrong.”
- **Overdose and death rates are rising** across the country.
- **Benzodiazepines** (like Xanax, Valium and Klonopin), **pain medications** (like OxyContin, Hydrocodone and Percocet) and **stimulants** (like Ritalin, Vyvance and Adderall) are **all targets for abuse**.
- Young people often start abusing by trying to **self-medicate problems like insomnia or anxiety**.
- Even kids with no prior substance use history are at risk. Pressure to perform academically and in sports can drive them to these drugs for “more energy.”
- On confidential surveys, youth report the most common source of prescription drugs is **taking them from home**. The first step in prevention is to **reduce access**.
 - **Take an inventory** of any prescription drugs and know how many pills each has.
 - **Do not leave pill bottles** out in the open.
 - **Properly dispose of any unused pills** so they can't be found or ingested.

Focus on Prevention

It is vital to be straightforward and share facts and dangers because misinformation can be fatal. Youth must understand that any prescription medication is dangerous when taken by someone it's not prescribed for. Drugs like those for ADHD and depression, not just for pain, can cause death, overdose or addiction when taken this way. Let youth know that if they are currently abusing prescription drugs, you are there to support them as they stop. Physical addiction to the most common drugs can happen quickly and requires medical support when quitting. Especially in rural areas, shame, stigma and a lack of privacy often stop people from admitting the problem. Reassure youth that getting help to overcome substance use shows strength, not “bad character” or weakness.

