



Preventing Prescription Drug Abuse in the United States: Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs

Office of National Drug Control Policy 2008

The Scope of the Problem

- Prescription drug (Rx) abuse is a serious public health problem in the United States. In 2006, 2.2 million teens, aged 12 to 17, abused a Rx (pain reliever, tranquilizer, stimulant, or sedative), and each day, 2,500 young people initiate (first misuse) a prescription pain reliever. Rx is fast becoming the “drug of choice” for 12- and 13-year olds. (NSDUH)
- In 2000, 3.8 million people, aged 12 and older, reported the current nonmedical use of a Rx. In 2006, that figure increased more than 84 percent, to 7 million Americans (3% of the total population), with the misuse of pain relievers representing 3/4 of the overall problem (5.2 million people). Rx abuse among young adults, aged 18-25, increased 20 percent from 2002 to 2006, driven by the non-medical use of prescription pain relievers. (NSDUH)
- Treatment admissions for prescription pain relievers increased more than 300 percent from 1995 to 2005. (TEDS)

The Administration is Working to Combat Rx Abuse

- ONDCP, and its federal partners, like the DEA, are committed to a coordinated strategy of prevention, treatment, and enforcement against Rx abuse. The overall aim is to reduce Rx diversion and abuse without compromising access to essential medications.
- One vehicle to prevent and reduce Rx misuse is through the implementation of Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs). PDMPs help to provide information on individuals who may be illegally selling, or abusing Rx drugs.

Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs)

- PDMPs may provide data to public health and law enforcement communities (upon request), and assist health professionals identify those who may be addicted to Rx so they can receive proper treatment.
- PDMPs also provide safeguards to protect patient confidentiality and access to Rx, while providing a more technologically-advanced way to track criminal activity (Rx forgeries and “doctor shopping”). Generally, either medical practitioners or pharmacists will report suspicious activity to law enforcement, or law enforcement may request access to a PDMP to seek additional information on an investigation.
- The average price to start a PDMP is approximately \$350,000. Federal grants are available to states through DOJ.

PDMP in the Statehouse

- ONDCP is actively working to promote the implementation of PDMPs in all 50 U.S. states.
- In 2001, only 15 states had a PDMP in place. Since then, 21 more states have enacted PDMP laws to ensure the safety, and validity of their Rx supply and delivery systems. New Jersey was the most recent.
- Of the remaining 14 states, 7 have introduced PDMP legislation this legislative year: Alaska, Florida, Georgia, Kansas, Maryland, Missouri, and New Hampshire. Officials in Arkansas, Montana, and Oregon have expressed interest in introducing PDMP legislation in the 2009 legislative year.

