



COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO NEWS RELEASE

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PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE A GROWING CONCERN IN COUNTY *Experts Meet to Develop Regional Drug Prevention Plans*

Prescription drugs are easy to get and often times end up in the hands of teens and young adults who use them to get high.

Recognizing that prescription drug abuse is a growing problem in the region, the County of San Diego Health and Human Services Agency (HHSA) today sponsored a prevention conference to address the issue and develop regional plans to prevent the problem from escalating.

David Mineta, Deputy Director of Demand Reduction for the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy (ONDCP), gave the keynote address at the Prescription Drug Abuse Prevention Summit, which was also sponsored by the Prescription Drug Task Force of San Diego County, and the Drug Enforcement Administration, San Diego Field Division.

“Preventing drug use and being aware of emerging drug problems is critical,” HHSA Director Nick Macchione told the crowd made up of law enforcement, educators, prevention specialists, youth organizations, and the faith community. “Prescription drugs can be highly addictive and their abuse has the potential to absolutely destroy families, and disable and kill people caught in their grip.”

In the last few years, more than a dozen people have died from prescription drug abuse.

“Some may say prescription drug abuse isn’t a huge problem because significant numbers of people aren’t dying. One death is one too many,” added Macchione, who encouraged participants to “help us develop a blueprint for preventing prescription drug abuse in San Diego.”

Every day, nationwide 2,500 youth, ages 12-17, abuse prescription drugs for the first time. Prescription drugs—pain relievers, tranquilizers, sedatives and stimulants—are the drugs most often abused by teens after marijuana and misuse increases as they grow older, according to ONDCP. Typically, young people get prescriptions drugs from their home’s medicine cabinet or from friends.

One in four teens in San Diego County has misused prescription drugs in their lifetime, according to a SANDAG study of juveniles arrested in 2009.

The County, at the direction of Chairwoman Pam Slater-Price, created the Prescription Drug Task Force and has been taking an active role in decreasing the availability of prescription drugs.

The Task Force has collected more than 2,800 pounds of unused medications during two take-back events. Additionally, 22 secure drop-off boxes have been established throughout the county.

“These drugs could have easily fallen into the wrong hands and led to abuse, addiction or death,” Chairwoman Slater-Price said at one of the take-back events.

Parents who believe their child might have a drug problem should call the County’s Access and Crisis Line at (800) 479-3339.

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