To: Local Media

From: Catrina Weber, Health Educator

RE: Prescription Drugs

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Prescription Drugs

“Your child is doing drugs!” “As a parent hearing that statement, what would spring to your mind…cocaine, ‘pot,’ heroin, meth?” Ask Catrina Weber, Health Educator at Central Michigan District Health Department. According to the CDC, in 2006, 2.1 million teens abused prescription drugs. In fact prescription medications are the 2nd most abused drug in young adults age 12 – 17 and is the number one drug choice of 12 and 13 year olds. So, why are teens turning to prescription drug use? Studies show that 4 out of 10 teens believe that prescription drugs are much safer to use than illegal drugs. They are also much easier to acquire than illegal drugs. Nearly half of teens who use prescription drugs report getting them for free from a friend or relative. Scarier yet, is the fact that often these drugs are taken by the handful at “pill parties”. At these parties, various types of prescription drugs are tossed in a bowl together, often called “trail mix” and then participants are able to pop as many as they’d like. This often leads to lethal combinations, causing drug interactions and no one being able to tell emergency responders what the victim has taken. The most commonly abused prescription drugs are pain relievers such as: Vicodin and Oxycontin but these are followed closely by depressants such as: Xanex and Ambien and also by stimulants, such as Ritalin.

So, what then is a parent to do? The first and easiest step to prevent your child from acquiring these prescription drugs is to get rid of old or unneeded pills. According to the Office of National Drug
Control Policy, the best way to dispose of your leftover medications is to simply take them out of their container and throw them in the trash. Mixing them with undesirable items like used coffee grounds or kitty litter will help make them less appealing to those who may go through your trash. You also can contact your local pharmacy and ask them if they participate in a “take back” program that allows you to bring unused medications back to the pharmacy for appropriate disposal. Only flush medications down the toilet if instructed to do so by the drugs’ accompanying patient information sheet. Parents and others who may have young people in their home should be aware of what and how much medication they have in their medicine cabinets. Try to keep prescription medications in a place that others wouldn’t typically have access to. Most importantly, talk with your child about the dangers of prescription drug use, so that they are aware of how dangerous this type of non-prescribed use can be.

This article has been brought to you by the Central Michigan District Health Department, which serves the residents of Arenac, Clare, Gladwin, Isabella, Osceola and Roscommon Counties. Visit our website: www.cmdhd.org

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