



Community Prevention Partners of Santa Cruz County  
A Drug Free Communities Coalition

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## **BRIDGING DRUG AND ALCOHOL PREVENTION EFFORTS FOR A SAFER COMMUNITY**

### **Community Prevention Partners Policy Brief for Prescription Drug Use**

#### **Community Prevention Partners:**

Community Prevention Partners (CPP) is an alcohol and other drug prevention coalition comprised of 193 community members and numerous local organizations. CPP's mission is to build a diverse community that promotes health and well-being, and enhances youth and community safety through sustainable alcohol and drug prevention efforts.

#### **Local Conditions:**

Community Prevention Partners (CPP) is concerned about the community cost of disposal of prescription and over the counter drugs. The existing take back program currently has 22 sites that accept medications including pharmacies, police stations, household hazardous waste facilities and a medical clinic. Over the last 4 years the program has steadily collected 1,000 pounds of drugs monthly (over-the-counter and prescription medications). Five additional clinics provide take back programs to their clients, and local jurisdictions have conducted multiple Take Back Days.

#### **What An EPR Ordinance Does:**

Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), also called Product Stewardship, is a strategy that places some responsibility for end-of-shelf-life management of consumer products on the manufacturers of the products, while encouraging product design that minimizes negative impacts on human health and the environment at every stage of the product's lifecycle.

#### **Summary of Local Data:**

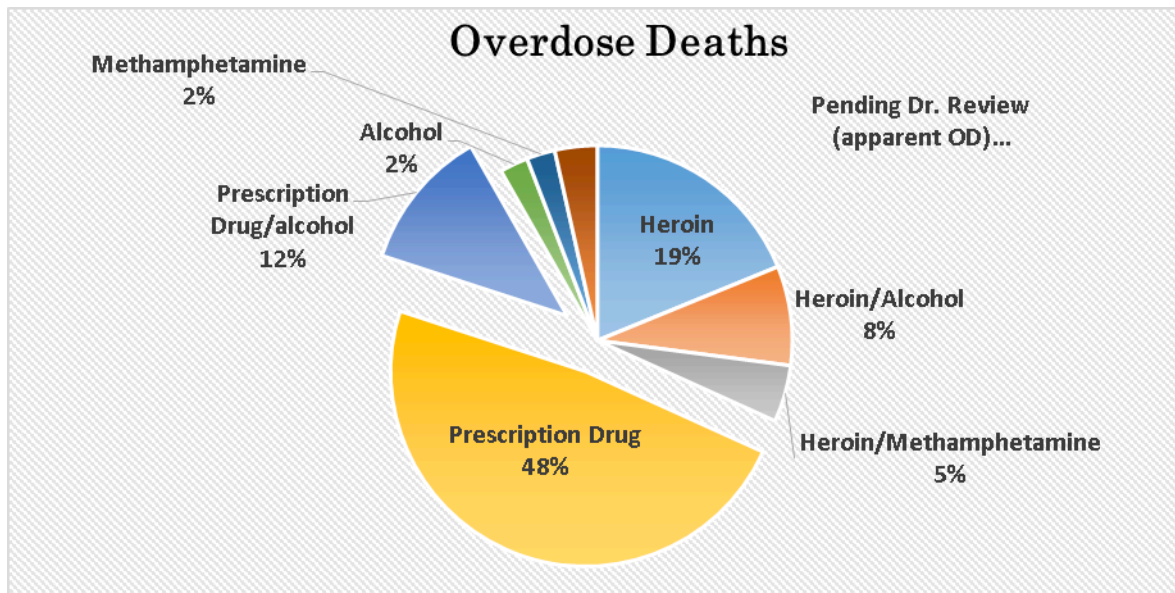
In the last decade, there has been an increasing trend in prescription drug misuse and abuse nationally and locally. Numerous studies show that the majority of prescription medicines that are abused come from families and friends.

Many residents in our county do not know how to safely dispose of medications, and end up holding onto old/ unused meds, flushing pills down the toilet or throwing them in the garbage. This can lead to other problems including but not limited to:

- Prescription drug misuse and abuse
- Damage to water treatment systems and
- Pollution to the environment and waterways.

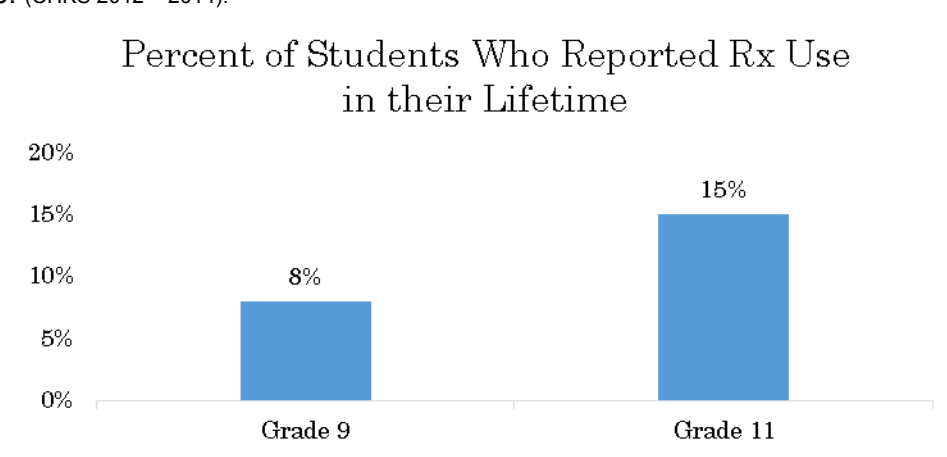
## Deaths:

- 54% of deaths related to overdose (32 of 58) involve prescription drugs. Twenty four deaths were directly attributable to prescription medications and eight involved a combination of prescription medications and alcohol, and two involved heroin and prescription drugs. (Coroner's Data January – December 2014).



## Substance Use:

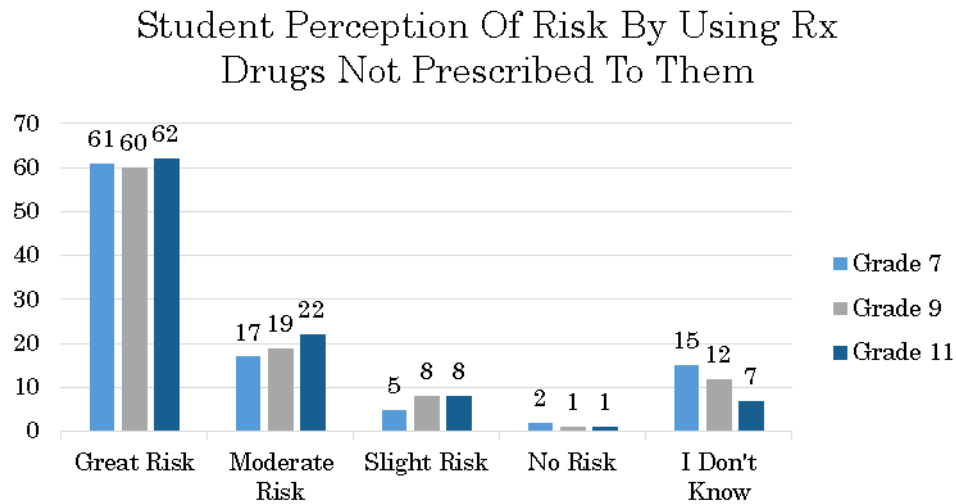
- 8% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders, 15% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders report they have used prescription pain killers in their lifetime. (CHKS 2012 – 2014).



- In the last 30 days, 4% - 6% of students have used prescription drugs not prescribed to them. (CHKS 2012 – 2014).
- 6% increase in respondents reporting use of prescription medication without a prescription from 2011 to 2013. (CAP 2013).
- 7% of students first used prescription drugs not prescribed to them starting as early as 11 years old, whereas 20% reported first use in high school, as early as 14 years old. (Seven Challenges Survey Data 2012 – 2014).
- Respondents were most likely to obtain prescription medicines not prescribed to them from friends, parties, homes (their own or those of friends), or purchasing it themselves. (Seven Challenges Survey Data 2012 – 2014).
- 2.2% of respondents reported using a prescription medication during the last 30 days without a prescription in 2011, and in 2013 the number rose to 2.8%. (Santa Cruz County Community Assessment Project 2013).

## Perception of Harm:

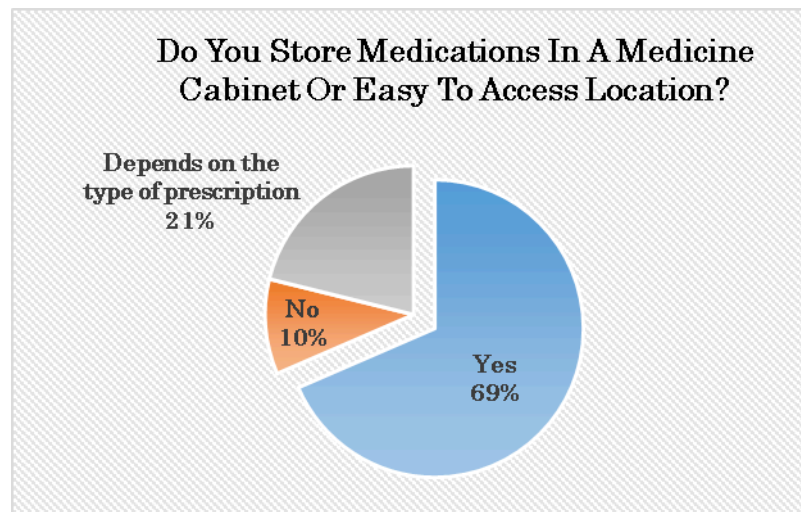
- 7% - 15% of junior high and high school respondents did not know how much individuals were at risk (not just physically) by using prescription drugs not prescribed to them. (CHKS 2012 – 2014).



- 85% - 90% of students in junior high and high school feel their parents think it would be very wrong for them to use prescription drugs not prescribed to them. (CHKS 2012 – 2014).
- 3% - 7% of junior high and high school respondents thought their friends would not think it was wrong for them to use prescription drugs not prescribed to them. (CHKS 2012 – 2014).
- 24% of respondents believe using prescription drugs not prescribed to them does not pose moderate to great risk. (Seven Challenges Survey Data 2012 – 2014).

## Access and Disposal:

- 69% of respondents store medications in a medicine cabinet or an easy to access location. (CPP Monitor Secure Dispose Survey Data 2014).
- 43% of community residents report that they would dispose of expired or unwanted medications by flushing them, discarding them in the garbage or recycling, or by mixing them with an undesirable substance such as kitty litter. (CPP Monitor Secure Dispose Survey Data 2014).



Sources for local data: California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS), Community Assessment Project Survey (CAPS), CPP Monitor Secure Dispose Survey Data, Coroner's Data, and the Seven Challenges Survey Data

## Treatment:

Primary Substance for Unique Treatment Clients				
	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013	2013-2014
Alcohol	23%	23%	29%	24%
Methamphetamines/other Amphetamines	13%	12%	19%	18%
Marijuana/Hashish	20%	22%	7%	12%
Heroin	34%	34%	36%	39%
Other Opiates (Synthetic Opiates, OxyCodone/OxyContin, Non-prescr Methadone)	6%	6%	7%	5%
Other Drugs	3%	2%	1%	1%

The growth in the use of prescription opiates is closely related to the growth in the use of heroin. Many prescription opiate users move on to use of heroin if their source of prescription opiates is no longer available, or if their bodies have habituated to prescription opiates and they need a more powerful drug to achieve the same level of euphoria. As indicated above, the use of all opiates (heroin, synthetic opiates, OxyCodone, OxyContin, and non-prescription methadone) as the primary drug for clients entering County-funded substance use disorder treatment programs has increased over the past four years from 40% of all treatment clients in 2010-11 to 44% of all treatment clients in 2013-14.

## Solution:

CPP is currently working with Supervisor Leopold to create an EPR Ordinance for the unincorporated areas of the County. In order to adequately address the problem and finance the collection and disposal of medications it would be most beneficial if each jurisdiction had a similar Ordinance in place.

To address improper disposal and the associated impacts, **the CPP recommends that an EPR Stewardship Ordinance is put into place locally** that includes the following elements:

- Over the counter medications
- Controlled substances
- Producers pay 100% of the program hard costs
- Convenience standards set to provide reasonably convenient and equitable access
- Producer funded and managed public education/ outreach programs that are subject to local government oversight
- Producers pay fees to reimburse public agency oversight costs
- Allows the public agency to assess a penalty/fine for failure to comply