



Community Prevention Partners (CPP), a Santa Cruz County drug and alcohol prevention coalition, is concerned about the disposal of sharps, prescription and over the counter drugs. Local youth report that they misuse over the counter cough and cold medications, and prescription medications. There is also an increasing trend in narcotic prescriptions, and the usage of prescription medication without a prescription. Over fifty percent of all overdose related deaths in 2014 in Santa Cruz County were related to prescription drugs.

- Community members do not safely dispose of medications (prescription and over the counter), and choose less than desirable options including home storage, flushing medications down the toilet or throwing them in the garbage. This can lead to a host of problems including but not limited to prescription drug misuse and abuse, and improper disposal of SHARPS puts many people at risk of injury and serious infection; damage to water treatment systems and pollution to the environment and waterways.

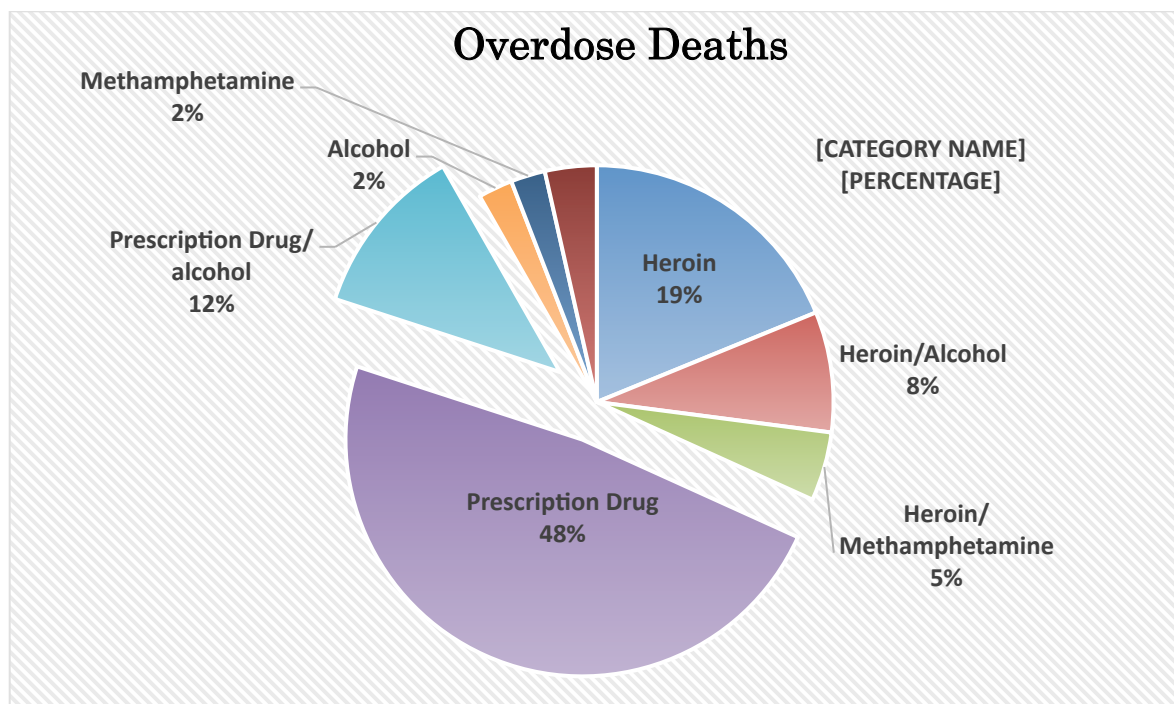
Numerous studies show that the majority of prescription medicines that are abused come from families and friends.

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

Compiled from the 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:

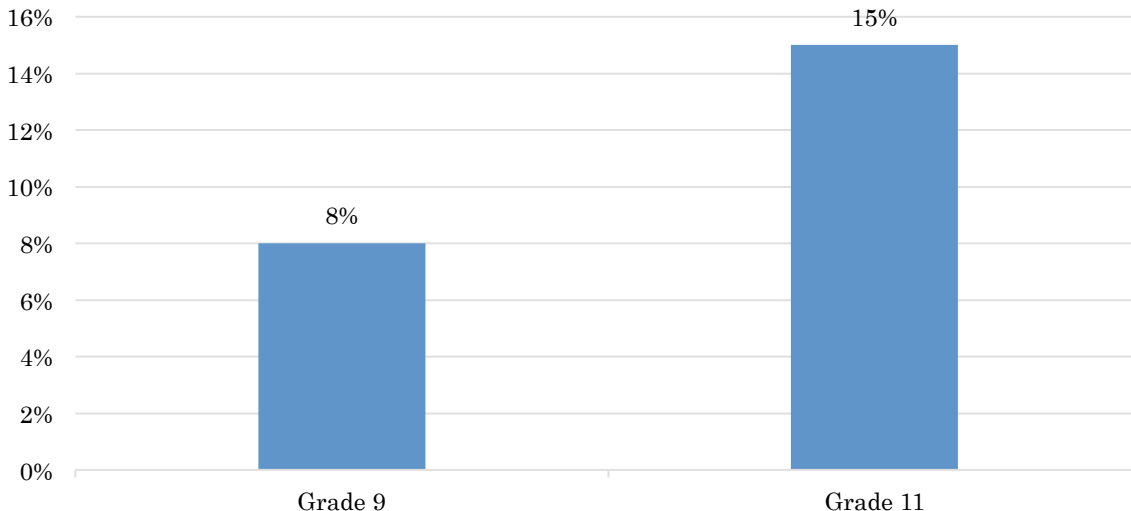
### **Deaths:**

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



## Substance Use:

### Percent of Students Who Reported Rx Use in their Lifetime

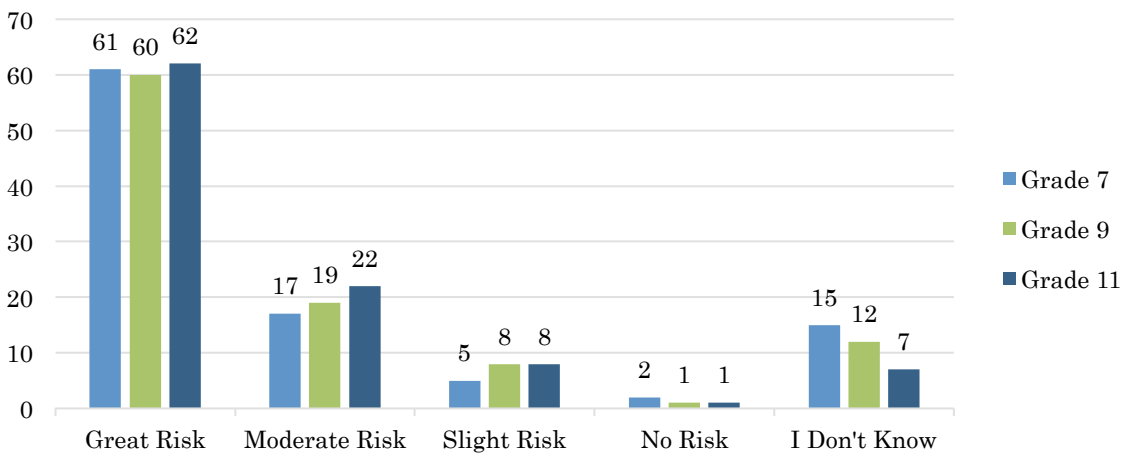


- 8% of 9<sup>th</sup> graders, 15% of 11<sup>th</sup> graders report they have used prescription pain killers in their lifetime. (CHKS 2012 – 2014).
- In the last 30 days, 4% - 6% of students have used prescription drugs not prescribed to them. (CHKS 2012 – 2014).
- 6% increase in respondents reporting 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:

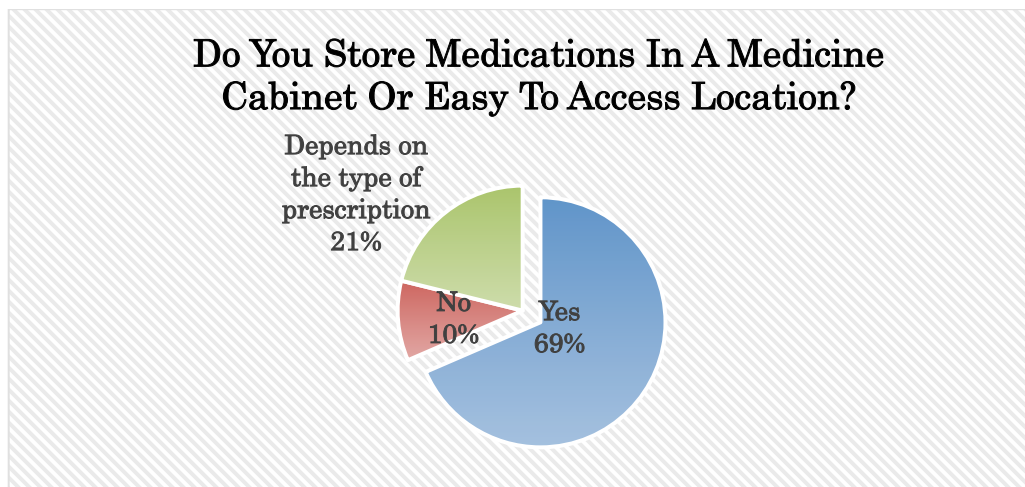
- 85% - 90% of students in junior high and high school feel their parents think it would be very wrong for them to use prescription drugs not prescribed to them. (CHKS 2012 – 2014).
- 3% - 7% of junior high and high school respondents thought their friends would not think it was wrong for them to use 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).
- 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).

## Student Perception Of Risk By Using Rx Drugs Not Prescribed To Them



### 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).



### Costs:

\* Over the past year, the Take Back program collected an average of 635 pounds of sharps per month, at a cost of about \$1,650. This equates to about 7600 pounds and \$20,000 per year. The amount has been slowly increasing since the beginning of the program, and we expect with more outreach and education there is room for further growth.

\* Currently the county spends approximately \$30,000 annually on disposal of prescription medications.