



Point Arena Joint Union High School District
Arena Union Elementary School District
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Colleen Cross Ed.D, Superintendent
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Dear Parent/Guardians:

At a recent Mendocino County Superintendent's meeting, Sheriff Tom Allman visited and cautioned school leaders about a nationwide rise in the use of prescription drugs by teens. I want parents to know that we have seen a few isolated cases of this trend in our local schools recently, so wish to pass on some prevention tips and advice that Sheriff Allman shared at that meeting.

Prescription drug use in general is up significantly in California over the past 5 years. As mentioned above, it is a national epidemic, and the Press Democrat did a series on it in September. Teens are accessing these drugs by stealing them from medicine cabinets both in their own home and their friend's homes. In several reports, students have visited a friend at their home, excused themselves to use the bathroom, and raided the medicine cabinet. Other reports say that students will dump a variety of prescription drugs into a bowl at a "Pharm" party, and students help themselves, having no idea what they are taking, or what may happen physiologically from the unknown drug interaction.

The trend seen most often is with a variety of prescription opiates such as Vicodin, OxyContin, Tramadol, Percodan, morphine pills, codeine (especially cough medicines), etc. Other prescription drug use includes sleeping pills and anti-anxiety drugs, and stimulants used to treat ADHD. Students as young as middle school age seem to believe that because these prescription drugs are issued and controlled by a pharmacy, they are a "safe" high. The truth is, the county has seen a marked increase in the number of teens addicted to Vicodin and other opiates, and national statistics show that more teens abuse prescription drugs than any other illicit drug except marijuana. Diligence to stop this trend is needed.

Parents are advised to keep current prescriptions locked up or well hidden, catalogue and monitor what you have in your home, turn in unused prescription drugs to the local pharmacy or Sheriff to be destroyed, and closely watch your children for behavior changes and/or unexplained physical/medical issues. It may also be prudent to discuss this trend with your children and clarify the dangers associated with using drugs that are not prescribed specifically for them.

Let's work together to educate our youth about this epidemic and the related dangers, and increase our diligence to monitor behavior and encourage healthy choices.

Sincerely,

Colleen Cross, Ed.D.
Superintendent
Point Arena Schools

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