

## U.S. Attorney Warns of Prescription Drug Abuse

By Barry Grissom U.S. Attorney for the District of Kansas

“The Talk” has traditionally been a conversation between a parent and their teenager about either the dangers of underage drinking or acting responsibly when hormones kick in for the first time. For families, these discussions are extremely important. However, any adolescent teaching moment these days must also include an open and honest exchange about the dangers of prescription drug abuse.

Just take these very sobering statistics into consideration. Drug overdose deaths among teens 15 to 19 years old are up 91 percent in the past decade. And the vast majority of these deaths are because every day, 2,000 teens in this country are using prescription drugs for the first time for the sole purpose of getting high.

The year 2009 marked the first year that, overall, more people in the United States died from drug overdoses than from automobile accidents. And this happened primarily because our nation is abusing prescription drugs at unprecedented levels. In fact more people abuse prescription drugs than the number of people who use cocaine, methamphetamine, and heroin combined.

Research has always shown that the most successful way to prevent drug overdose is to prevent drug use in the first place. To help parents find the resources they need to have ‘The Talk’ with their kids before they even think about abusing drugs, the U.S. Attorneys’ community has teamed up with the Partnership at Drugfree.org to educate our citizens about the dangers that lurk in medicine cabinets across the country.

On September 23, “the Partnership” will begin its multi-year Medicine Abuse Project campaign to help bring much needed attention to this epidemic and to educate the public about the dangers of abusing prescription and over-the-counter medicines.

As their partner in this initiative, we will also be helping to promote the Drug Enforcement Administration’s fifth National Prescription Drug Take Back Day on September 29 when citizens can turn in their unwanted and expired medicines in a safe and responsible manner. When the results of the four previous Take-Back Days are combined, the DEA and its partners collected over 1.5 million pounds, or 774 tons, of prescription drugs.

“It’s never too late to have the talk” doesn’t apply when it comes to talking to your children about prescription drug abuse. If you are a parent like me, and you are ready to have ‘the talk’ with your son or daughter, it’s important that you have the best resources available to make this an educational and informative discussion. Go to [drugfree.org](http://drugfree.org) for helpful tools and more information.

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