



StopMedicineAbuse.org

Dear Parent or Guardian:

As your children's school nurse, I want to alert you to a type of substance abuse that many parents are not aware of yet: teen cough medicine abuse. Drug abuse among teens has long been a challenging issue. Alcohol and marijuana abuse, for example, are fairly well known by parents; however, through this letter I hope to help you become more informed about teen medicine abuse and how you can keep your teens safe and healthy.

Multiple national surveys, such as the Monitoring the Future survey, point to the abuse of both prescription and over-the-counter (OTC) medicines, such as cough medicines containing the active ingredient dextromethorphan (or DXM), as a troubling substance abuse problem among teens. According to the 2013 survey, four percent of high school teens admit to having abused cough medicine to get high in the past year. A national survey by the Partnership at DrugFree.org released 2013 provides another wake-up call for parents: roughly 1 in 3 high school teens know someone who has abused cough medicine.

To help you learn about medicine abuse and how to prevent it, the National Association of School Nurses (NASN) and the Consumer Healthcare Products Association (CHPA) teamed up to provide the *Home to Homeroom* campaign. An educational program spearheaded by school nurses nationwide, Home to Homeroom is focused on enlisting parents in teen medicine abuse prevention with a goal of raising awareness about this type of teen substance abuse. The reason is simple: **Parents** play a pivotal role in keeping teens drug-free. Research indicates that kids who have regular conversations with their parents about the risks of drug abuse are up to half as likely to not abuse drugs.

The *Home to Homeroom* campaign has numerous tools to help you learn more about the risks of cough medicine abuse and how to keep your children safe. You can access these free materials online at **StopMedicineAbuse.org**. (*Select School Nurses from the Tools To Take Action menu option on the website's top navigation bar to access the Toolkit.*)

- **Home to Homeroom Toolkit:** Downloadable materials with answers to parents' most frequently asked questions
- **Need to Know Facts:** The website contains information like slang terms for cough medicine abuse, the health risks of abuse, warning signs that your teens may be abusing, and resources for professional help if you suspect your child might have a substance abuse problem
- **Get Connected:** Growing social networks for information sharing and support are available including a Facebook Page, a Twitter account (@StopMedAbuse), a YouTube account, and a Quarterly Newsletter subscription

Please join me in this campaign by visiting StopMedicineAbuse.org and talking with your children about cough medicine abuse. Feel free to contact me with any questions or if I can help provide you with other resources. Together we can keep your teens safe, healthy, and ready to learn.

Sincerely,

