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## *Prescription Drug Abuse Fact Sheet*

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### ***What is prescription drug abuse?***

Prescription drug abuse can be the use of a medication without a prescription, using a prescribed medication a way other than as prescribed, or using a medication for the experience of mood altering effects.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has classified prescription drug abuse as an epidemic. Data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health show that one in four people aged 12 and over who used drugs for the first time in 2012 began by using a prescription drug non-medically.

### ***How does prescription drug abuse compare to other types of illicit drug abuse?***

According to the Centers for Disease Control, approximately 100 Americans died from overdose every day in 2010. Prescription drugs were involved in more than half of the 38,300 overdose deaths that year, and opioid pain relievers were involved in over 16,600 of these deaths. There were about 3,000 drug poisoning deaths related to heroin. Drug overdose deaths outnumbered deaths from gunshot wounds or motor vehicle crashes.

Abuse of prescription medications can also act as a gateway drug for heroin. Prescription opioids such as oxycodone and hydrocodone are the same class of drug and produce a similar effect as heroin, but are much more expensive in street value. Data has shown that 81% of first-time heroin users previously abused prescription drugs.

### ***How is prescription drug abuse affecting our community?***

According to several local police departments, there has been a rise in the number of overdoses from last year to this year. For example, one department reported an 89% increase in overdoses from 2013 to 2014 in the same four month time period. The average overdose age has also decreased, with one town reporting a decrease from 32.5 in 2013 to 28.6 in 2014.

### ***What is being done locally to help prevent prescription drug abuse?***

In Barnstable County, every town's local police department has a drug collection box that is available to the public year round.

The prescription monitoring program is an electronic monitoring system that collects prescription data submitted by pharmacies on all Schedule II - V drugs. This system helps not only the Drug Control Program in determining prescribing and dispensing trends, but it also allows doctors to view their patient's prescription history and look for signs of drug seeking behavior.

On April 10<sup>th</sup>, the Yarmouth and Barnstable Police Departments hosted a discussion for health care professionals on combating prescription drug abuse in our community.



## ***For More Information***

- View the Office of National Drug Control Policy prescription drug abuse initiative at: <http://www.whitehouse.gov/ondcp/prescription-drug-abuse>
- For information on referrals for alcohol and other drug abuse problems and related concerns, call: Massachusetts Substance Abuse Information and Education Hotline: **(800) 327-5050, TTY (888) 448-8321**
- For information on the Massachusetts Online Prescription Monitoring Program, visit: [www.mass.gov/dph/dcp/onlinepmp](http://www.mass.gov/dph/dcp/onlinepmp)
- To find a prescription drug collection box near you, visit: [www.DEAdiversion.usdoj.gov/SEARCH-NTBI/](http://www.DEAdiversion.usdoj.gov/SEARCH-NTBI/)

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