

## What's in your Medicine Cabinet?

According to the 2007 Youth Risk Behavior Survey, **14% of CESU students** (8-12 grade) and **26% of MMU seniors** had used a prescription drug not prescribed to them. The Vermont Department of Health reports that: "...there has been a steady increase in the non-medical use of [prescription] drugs", particularly painkillers, depressants, anti-anxiety drugs and stimulants. Although poisonings and deaths as a result of prescription drug abuse have increased "dramatically", many teenagers still believe recreational prescription drug use is safe (Office of National Drug Control Policy, 2008).

The Office of National Drug Control Policy report (January 2008) states:

- 4 out of 10 teens think that prescription medicines are much safer to abuse than illicit drugs, even if they are not prescribed by a doctor.
- Between 1995 and 2005, treatment admissions for abuse of prescription pain relievers grew more than 300%.
- Unintentional poisoning deaths involving psychotherapeutic drugs...grew 84% from 1999-2004.
- More than 3 in 5 teens say prescription pain relievers are easy to get from parents' medicine cabinets...The majority of teens (56%) agree that prescription drugs are easier to get than illicit drugs.
- Youth (12-17) whose parents express strong disapproval of drug use are far less likely to engage in substance use.

### *What Can Parents and Caregivers Do?*

Educate yourself about medications (both prescription and over the counter) that young people are abusing.

[www.streetdrugs.org](http://www.streetdrugs.org)

[www.nida.nih.gov](http://www.nida.nih.gov)

[www.kidshealth.org/teen](http://www.kidshealth.org/teen)

Start a conversation with your teenager and take advantage of teachable moments (movie/TV references, news stories, personal experiences). Set clear expectations and let them know that misuse of medications can be just as dangerous as using street drugs.

[www.drugfree.org/Parent/Resources/Prescription Medicine Misuse](http://www.drugfree.org/Parent/Resources/Prescription_Medicine_Misuse)

[www.timetotalk.org](http://www.timetotalk.org)

Keep potentially dangerous medications out of your medicine cabinet and monitor their quantity. Properly dispose of unwanted medications by taking out of original containers and throwing them in the trash, ideally mixing them with kitty litter or coffee grounds.

[www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/factsht/proper\\_disposal.html](http://www.whitehousedrugpolicy.gov/drugfact/factsht/proper_disposal.html)

For more information, please contact:

Sara Mabley, Student Assistance Program Counselor (SAP) at MMU  
858-1636 or Sara.Mabley@cesu.k12.vt.us