GenerationRx
Preventing the Misuse and Abuse of Prescription Medications

Getting Started

Teenagers are an important audience in any prescription drug abuse educational campaign.

In particular, teens hold a variety of inaccurate beliefs regarding the safety, addiction potential, and legality of abusing prescription medications. And because students do not usually get the opportunity to "correct" these myths in most standard middle school or high school classrooms, it is crucial that they receive valid information through other types of programming or events.

A successful and engaging teen-directed program requires creative thinking and good planning. In this toolkit, we present guidelines and materials to help you design and execute your presentation. Though there is no perfect formula, a successful program contains a number of elements outlined below.

Where do I start?

Your first task is to establish the venue specifics (e.g., time, place). This information will shape all other program planning, including what you are able to reasonably do with the students.

Who is my audience?

The materials provided in this toolkit are appropriate for upper middle school- and high school-aged students (grades 8-12).

Where should I present? How do I make the arrangements?

There are a number of logical places to host your program, though all require upfront coordination with the host organization. Below is a list of potential possibilities (including suggested contact persons for each venue):

- Schools (health teachers, school nurses, administrators)
- After-school clubs such as 4H, Teen Institute or Youth-to-Youth (club advisors)
- Religious youth groups (faith-based organization leaders)
- Sports teams (local coaches)

In a short email or phone call to potential hosts, introduce yourself and indicate your interest in providing an educational program about this problem. Be as flexible as possible with the timing of your event, and emphasize your willingness to adapt to their needs. Finally, be persistent, and don't be discouraged if you don't hear back immediately.

How long should my program be?

A 30-60 minute program (with time devoted to questions) is usually appropriate and easy to facilitate. However, you can certainly plan shorter or longer programs as well.

I know where and when I'll be presenting my program. Now, what will I do?

We suggest that you use a variety of educational techniques in your presentation, including both discussion-based and interactive approaches. In this toolkit, you can customize your own program itinerary from a menu of activities including:

- Presentation tools (formal lecture- or discussion-centered activities)
- Activities (learning tools that require audience participation)
- Visual aids (posters and brochures that can be disseminated)

When planning, choose activities which you feel most comfortable leading. Each activity is designed to work as a stand-alone piece, so do not feel that you must include one component over another. Below, you will find sample programs (organized by time length) that incorporate a variety of approaches. Be creative though – these are only suggestions!

30-minute program:
15 minutes – "Prescription for Danger" interactive lecture
10 minutes – "Generation Rx Family Feud" game
5 minutes – Question/Answer session

60-minute program:
25 minutes – "Generation Rx: The Abuse of Medications in a Drug-Taking Society" discussion
30 minutes – "Scene 2" skits
5 minutes – Question/Answer session

Can I adapt an activity?

Sure! In fact, any of the activities can be adapted to suit your audience size, time requirements, etc. For example, if you plan to use a discussion-based activity with a large group, we suggest that you divide the audience into smaller groups. Alternatively, if you're limited by time, you may want to only focus on one discussion component (e.g., prescription drug abuse myths) rather than covering all topics.

Is there anything that I shouldn't do?

- Don't just "lecture" to the students. Research shows that this type of teaching strategy (i.e., simply talking to the students) is the least effective for learning, and teens will begin to lose attention quickly. This is not to say that you shouldn't include any formal lecture – just be sure to frequently change up your delivery style when doing so. For example, asking questions of the audience is one way to make a lecture presentation more engaging. Additionally, if lecturing, be sure to begin an entirely new activity after 15 minutes.

- Do not glamorize prescription drug abuse, which includes talking about drug abuse "benefits" such as weight loss, increased energy, etc.

- Do not suggest that everyone (or even a majority) of teens is abusing prescription drugs. Remember: if 1 out of 5 teens is abusing, then 4 out of 5 are not. This clarification helps to reduce pressure that teens should abuse because "everyone else is doing so".

- Avoid biased or inaccurate websites, including those that provide user experiences that promote drug abuse. Equip yourself with good-quality resources, including well-respected websites (such as those highlighted in this toolkit) that provide science-based and accurate information.

Do I need to do this alone?

No! We encourage you to partner with a local health professional (pharmacist, doctor, nurse, etc.) to deliver your program. Alternatively, you may ask a local law enforcement officer or addiction treatment specialist to accompany you. Another suggestion: teens themselves! Using teens to deliver this information is a very powerful way to connect with your audience, and the experience will have a great impact for all involved.

Just remember - one of the most important factors of an effective presentation is enthusiasm! Make sure that you and your partner(s) are passionate about the topic, and your program will be a success!

How can I determine if my program is a success?

We encourage you to plan time in your program for a brief evaluation activity. Bring copies of the provided survey tool with you and distribute to audience members at the end of your program. Later, examine the completed evaluations to see those components of your program that were well-received and those that could be improved. In order to facilitate this process, please mail completed surveys to:

Rebecca Wade-Mdivanian
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Stillman Hall
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If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Becky Wade-Mdivanian at 614.292.6934 or wade-mdivanian.1@osu.edu.

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