PARTNERSHIP FOR A DRUG-FREE AMERICA®
KEY FINDINGS OF:
2005 PARTNERSHIP ATTITUDE TRACKING STUDY
on TEEN DRUG ABUSE

“Generation Rx: A Culture of Pharming Takes Root”

Alarming statistics from the Partnership’s national survey confirm that intentionally abusing prescription (Rx) and over-the-counter (OTC) medications to get high are now entrenched behaviors in today’s teen population.

Key Findings:

- Abuse of Rx/OTC medicines is now so prevalent it is “normalized” among teens.
  - Nearly one in five teens (19 percent, or 4.5 million) report abusing prescription medications to get high; and,
  - One in 10 (10 percent, or 2.4 million) report abusing cough medicine to get high.

- Far too many teens have a false sense of security about the abuse of Rx/OTC medicines:
  - Two in five teens (40 percent, or 9.4 million) agree that Rx medicines, even if they are not prescribed by a doctor, are much safer to use than illegal drugs;
  - Nearly one-third of teens (31 percent, or 7.3 million) believe there’s “nothing wrong” with using Rx medicines without a prescription “once in a while;”
  - Nearly three out of 10 teens (29 percent, or 6.8 million) believe prescription pain relievers – even if not prescribed by a doctor – are not addictive; and,
  - More than half of teens (55 percent, or 13 million) don’t agree strongly that using cough medicines to get high is risky.

- With the majority of teens (56 percent, or 13.4 million) agreeing that Rx medicines are easier to get than illegal drugs, teens see these substances as readily available highs.
When asked why teens would abuse prescription pain relievers:

- More than three in of five (62 percent, or 14.6 million) say prescription pain relievers are easy to get from parents’ medicine cabinets;

- Half of teens (50 percent, or 11.9 million) say prescription pain relievers are easy to get through other people’s prescriptions; and,

- More than half of teens (52 percent, or 12.3 million) say prescription pain relievers are “available everywhere.”

- Educating parents is crucial to helping prevent/intervene with this problem – and educated parents must get through to their kids:

  - Kids who learn a lot about the risks of drugs from their parents are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs, but,

  - Nine in 10 parents of teens (92 percent or 22 million) say they have talked to their teen about the dangers of drugs, yet fewer than one-third of teens (31 percent or 7.4 million) say they “learn a lot about the risks of drugs” from their parents.

Troubling Trends:

- Pharming - Kids “getting high” abusing Rx or OTC drugs;

- It has never been easier to get high - Internet accessibility and loose e-commerce enforcement further enable easy acquisition;

- Parents do not understand the behavior of intentionally abusing medicine to get high;

- Parents are not discussing the risks of abuse of prescription and/or non-prescription cough medicine with their children;

- Three out of five parents report discussing marijuana “a lot” with their children, but only one third of parents report discussing the risks of using prescription medicines or non-prescription cold or cough medicine to get high.

Main Substances of Concern:

- Prescription (Rx) drugs (pain relievers, tranquilizers, stimulants, sedatives)
- OTC drugs (antitussives, CNS stimulants, antihistamines)
- Inhalants (inhaled fumes)
- Methamphetamine (stimulant)