

**WHAT ARE THE WARNING SIGNS AND SYMPTOMS OF PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE?**

Signs and symptoms of prescription drug abuse depend on the particular drug being abused.

Opioid Painkillers - constipation, slow slurred speech, depression, low blood pressure, decreased respiration rate, drug skin/itching, confusion, sleep deprivation or “nodding”, watery or droopy eyes, nausea/vomiting, constant flu-like symptoms

Sedatives & Tranquilizers - drowsiness, confusion, unsteady gait, poor judgment, involuntary and rapid movement of the eyeballs, loss of coordination, slowed reflexes, slurred speech

Stimulants - weight loss, agitation, repetitive behavior, irritability, insomnia, high blood pressure, irregular heartbeat, hyperactivity, shaking, sweating, dilated pupils, elevated body temperature, seizures, paranoia

Other General Signs & Symptoms of Prescription Drug Abuse Include:

- Stealing, forging, or selling prescriptions
- Taking higher doses than prescribed
- Excessive mood swings
- Poor decision-making
- Seeking prescriptions from more than one physician (“Doctor Shopping”)
- Seeking prescriptions to be filled by multiple pharmacies (“Pharmacy Hopping”)
- Borrowing money or having extra cash
- Visiting online prescription dispensing websites



**HELPFUL RECOMMENDATIONS ABOUT YOUR PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS**

- Keep your physician informed about all medications you are taking.
- Take your medicine as prescribed. Every bottle has instructions that specifically inform you of the dosage, time interval between dose, and length of time it is to be taken.
- Never give your prescription meds to anyone else; the medication has been specifically prescribed for your medical disease, ailment, or condition; it is not intended for someone else.
- Always monitor your prescription bottles in the medicine cabinet, paying careful attention to the quantities remaining. Misuse and abuse of medications from medicine cabinets by other family members and/or friends happens with more and more regularity
- Ask friends and family to safeguard their prescription drugs as well.
- Never leave your prescription bottle or meds laying around the house. Children are curious and we should insure their safety from these powerful medications.
- Ask your physician or pharmacist about the medication you are prescribed, especially if you feel you are having a negative reaction.
- Read the information your pharmacist provides before starting to take medications.
- Be very mindful of instructions on the prescription label warning against operating a motor vehicle or other type equipment; driving under the influence of mind-altering chemicals can result in injury or death. Consult your physician or pharmacist when in doubt.
- Please remember to properly discard or dispose of any unused or outdated prescriptions. There are several options to disposing these medications. You can contact the Luzerne County District Attorney’s Office for information on the Medicine Take Back Programs or consult the U.S. Food and Drug Admin. website ([druginfo@fda.hhs.gov](mailto:druginfo@fda.hhs.gov); 1-888-463-6332) to learn more about proper disposal.

**INFORMATIONAL WEBSITES ON PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE**

- [monitoringthefuture.org](http://monitoringthefuture.org)
- [nida.gov](http://nida.gov) (National Institute on Drug Abuse)
- [samhsa.gov/rx](http://samhsa.gov/rx) safety (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)
- [ondcp.gov](http://ondcp.gov) (Office of National Drug Control Policy)
- [theantidrug.com](http://theantidrug.com) (Parents. The Anti-Drug)
- [pharmacy.osu.edu/outreach/generation-rx](http://pharmacy.osu.edu/outreach/generation-rx) (The Generation Rx Initiative)
- [streetdrugs.org](http://streetdrugs.org)
- [promoteprevent.org](http://promoteprevent.org) (National Center For Mental Health Promotion & Youth Violence Prevention)
- [mayoclinic.com](http://mayoclinic.com)
- [drugfreeworld.org](http://drugfreeworld.org)
- [thepartnershipatdrugfree.org](http://thepartnershipatdrugfree.org)
- [memorials.drug.org/memorials/mark\\_bauer](http://memorials.drug.org/memorials/mark_bauer) (Mark Bauer Prescription Medication Memorial Story)

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**Contact us to schedule a confidential counseling appointment or to arrange an informational program on prescription drug abuse for your school, business, community group, or organization.**

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# “PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE SPECIALTY PROGRAM”

## Prevention/Education and Treatment



developed by

# WYOMING VALLEY ALCOHOL AND DRUG SERVICES, INC.

***FOREWORD:***

Prescription Drug Abuse is the nation's fastest growing drug problem. While there has been a marked decrease in the use of some illicit drugs, data from the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) shows that nearly one-third of people aged 23 and over who used drugs for the first time began by using a prescription drug non-medically. Additionally, the latest MONITORING THE FUTURE study—the nation's largest survey of drug use among young people—showed that prescription drugs are the second most abused category of drugs after marijuana. Wyoming Valley Alcohol and Drug Services, Inc., a leader in addiction prevention/education and treatment since 1973, has decided to aggressively embark on a program to reduce and hopefully eradicate prescription drug abuse by establishing protocols and procedures to address the epidemic of prescription drug abuse in our community.

### ***WHY HAS WVADS, INC. DECIDED TO DEVELOP SPECIALIZED PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE PROGRAMS?***

Prescription drug abuse and misuse has reached epidemic proportions in the United States. Today, more than ever, we need to develop aggressive and effective prevention, education, intervention, and treatment strategies and approaches to combat this alarming rise of prescription drug abuse. Over the last several years, we have seen an unprecedented increase of prescription drug abusers on our agency caseloads.

Clinical – we have developed a specialized treatment program with highly-trained clinicians that addresses not only the prescription drugs of abuse, but also takes into account the specific needs of the individual patient. With the assistance and expertise of our Medical Director, Dr. Edward Carey, we have developed treatment protocols and procedures that will provide the patient a tremendous opportunity for recovery. Additionally, our relapse prevention program will

assist the patient in learning how to maintain their recovery so long-term sobriety and drug free living can become a reality.

Prevention/Education – WVADS, Inc. has developed a brochure specifically on prescription drug abuse and has created an informational repository of community resources on various aspects of prescription abuse. Examples of the resources are: Commonly Abused Prescription Drugs and Their Effects, Proper Disposal of Unused or Outdated Prescription Drugs, Proper Use of Prescription Drugs, Reasons For Prescription Drug Abuse, Websites For Information on Prescription Drug Abuse, etc. Our highly-trained prevention/education team is available to provide training, workshops, seminars, and speaking engagements on many aspects of prescription drug abuse. Call today at (570) 820-8888.

### ***WHAT IS PRESCRIPTION DRUG ABUSE?***

According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), it is the non-medical use or abuse of prescription drugs; the intentional misuse of a medication outside of the normally accepted standards of its use and/or taking a medication in a manner other than that prescribed or for a different condition than that for which the medication is prescribed. According to the National Household Survey on Drug Abuse (NSDUH), youth who use drugs are more likely to abuse prescription medications as well. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), an estimated 48 million people (ages 12 and older) have used prescription drugs for non-medical reasons in their lifetimes. This represents approximately 20% of the U.S. population.

### **The Facts Don't Lie:**

- \* Drug poisoning deaths now outnumber traffic deaths as the leading cause of injury deaths in the U.S.

- \* The National Center For Health Statistics points to the misuse or abuse of prescription drugs as the driver of the upward trend in these poisoning deaths.
- \* There were 41,000 poisoning deaths in the U.S. in 2008, the latest year for which statistics are available.
- \* More people die in America every year from prescription drug abuse than die from heroin and cocaine combined, according to a new report from the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention.
- \* The CDC found a fourfold increase in deaths from prescription narcotics over the past decade. Not surprisingly, it coincides with a fourfold increase in the number of prescriptions written for the powerful painkillers.
- \* Dr. Thomas Frieden, Director of the CDC, states that most people who die from prescription drug overdoses are taking someone else's medicines.
- \* Annually, between 15-20 million Americans report using a prescription drug for non-medical reasons at least once per year.
- \* Persons 65 years of age and above comprise only 13% of the population, yet, they account for approx. one-third of all medications prescribed in the U.S. ...older patients are more likely to be prescribed long-term and multiple prescriptions, which could lead to unintentional misuse.
- \* 70% of people, age 12 and older, who abuse prescription painkillers, say they got them from relatives and friends.
- \* About 40% of 12th graders say that painkillers are fairly easy to get.
- \* Every day, 2,500 youth, ages 12-17, abuse a painkiller for the very first time.
- \* The National Center on Addiction and Substance Abuse at Columbia University is very concerned with the fact that many online pharmacies are not certified and, many times, there are no controls limiting access to children. State licensed, legitimate, and reputable internet pharmacies can provide significant benefit to consumers, however, these rogue, unregulated, non-certified pharmacies contribute to easy availability to teens.

### ***WHAT ARE SOME OF THE COMMONLY ABUSED PRESCRIPTION DRUGS?***

Although many prescription drugs can be abused, there are several classifications of medications that are commonly abused. According to the National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), the three (3) classes of prescription drugs that are most-commonly abused are:

- Opioids – which are most often prescribed to treat pain. Examples are: Oxycontin, Percodan, Percocet, Vicodin, Lortab, Lorcet, Dilaudid, Opana, Numorphan, Demerol, Methadone, Actiq, Duragesic, Sublimaze, Darvon, Darvocet, Codeine, Morphine
- Central Nervous System (CNS) Depressants – which are used to treat anxiety and sleep disorders. Examples are: Amytal, Nembutal, Mebaral, Seconal, Phenobarbital, Ativan, Halcion, Librium, Valium, Xanax, Klonopin, Ambien
- Stimulants – which are prescribed to treat the sleep disorder narcolepsy, obesity, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD). Examples are: Biphedamine, Dexedrine, Adderall, Concerta, Ritalin; additionally, Dextromethorphan (DXM) found in some cough and cold medications.

