



Jan. 8, 2014

Rob Nichols, 330-760-7582, Rob.Nichols@governor.ohio.gov

OHIO LAUNCHES YOUTH DRUG ABUSE PREVENTION INITIATIVE, “START TALKING!”
Research Shows Conversations with Youth Can Stop Drug Abuse before It Starts

COLUMBUS – As we focus on our New Year’s resolutions for 2014, Ohio Gov. John R. Kasich and First Lady Karen W. Kasich urge Ohio families to adopt a pledge for the coming year: a pledge that will help keep their children safe from the tragedies that result from drugs. It’s part of **START TALKING**, a new drug abuse prevention initiative being kicked off in Ohio today with a focus on ways we can all work to reduce the likelihood of youth drug use before it even starts.

START TALKING is inspired by research that shows youth are up to 50 percent less likely to use drugs when parents and adults talk with them about substance use and abuse.

“We’re making real progress in fighting prescription drug abuse in Ohio, because we made up our minds to fight the problem head on,” said Gov. Kasich. “But we still have more work to do because illicit drug abuse remains a huge problem in our state. Our law enforcement agencies are fighting to curb abuse on the supply end, and each of us as parents can do our part by talking to our children. Start Talking pulls together many proven strategies, giving us some very potent tools that let us come at the problem from all sides. It’s a tough problem that calls for an even tougher fight. But it’s a fight we must win, because our future – our children – are at stake.”

“I hear heartbreaking stories around the state about parents who have lost children to drug abuse or overdose before their youthful potential could be fully realized,” said Ohio First Lady Karen Kasich. “As a mother, I know that no family or neighborhood – affluent or disadvantaged, urban or rural – is immune from the dangers of drugs. However, we can educate ourselves, connect with our communities and start talking to our children about these issues to help them resist peer pressure and temptations to use drugs.”

Drug abuse is a public health epidemic across the nation, and Ohio is not immune. In 2011, drug overdoses were the leading cause of accidental deaths in our state, with one Ohioan dying from a drug overdose every five hours. Under Gov. Kasich’s leadership, Ohio has made attacking the drug problem a priority. Efforts are underway to broaden public and professional education, particularly regarding the prescribing and abuse of opioids; law enforcement has ramped up interdiction efforts on our highways and in our communities; and treatment options and recovery supports have been expanded to help those struggling with addiction regain control of their lives.

Gov. Kasich and Mrs. Kasich kicked off the new initiative today at events at West Carrollton Middle School and Finneytown Local School District Secondary School and were joined by Ohio Attorney General Mike DeWine, former Cincinnati Bengals Hall of Famer Anthony Muñoz, Ohio Superintendent of Instruction Richard Ross, Ohio Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services Director Tracy Plouck, Ohio Department of Aging Director Bonnie Burman, Ohio Department of Health Director Dr. Ted Wymyslo and Ohio Department of Public Safety Director John Born.

To date, a number of schools have pledged their support and committed to promoting the new **START TALKING** program. The initiative brings together four programs designed to interact with parents, other adults and youth in different ways:

- **Know!** is a drug prevention and awareness partnership developed by The Drug-Free Action Alliance that targets parents and caregivers of middle school students and empowers them to raise their children substance-free. Its goal is to increase communication between parents and their children about substance abuse. This is achieved through free, twice-monthly emails that offer parent tips to families to help them talk about this subject.
- **Parents360 Rx** is a component of a national community education program developed by the Partnership at Drugfree.org that has demonstrated significantly increased knowledge of substance abuse among adults, thereby enhancing confidence in their ability to speak with teens about the subject. Ohio is disseminating Parents360 Rx Action Toolkits to assist parents and school leaders in hosting discussions locally to support prevention efforts in their communities.
- **5 Minutes for Life** is led by the Ohio Highway Patrol and the Ohio National Guard, in partnership with high schools and the Ohio High School Athletic Association (OHSAA). Patrol and National Guard members talk to student athletes and encourage them to become ambassadors who lead peer-to-peer conversations that promote healthy lifestyles. The statewide partnership involves all 58 Patrol Posts, more than 800 OHSAA-member high schools and Ohio National Guard Service members from around the state.
- **Building Youth Resiliency** and encouraging good behavioral health among young people are both essential to enhancing their ability to resist substance abuse and addiction. The Office of Ohio First Lady Karen W. Kasich, in partnership with other state agencies, is seeking applications to assist local communities in utilizing evidence-based programs to help youth resist substance use. This initiative will give communities and schools the tools to develop student's resiliency so they have the courage to push back against peer pressure.

More information about Start Talking is available at: www.StartTalking.Ohio.Gov

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