

John R. Kasich, Governor
Mary Taylor, Lieutenant Governor
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For Immediate Release

May is Substance Abuse Awareness and Education Month in Ohio

Awareness, Education Key to Preventing a Lifetime of Addiction

(COLUMBUS, OH -- May 11, 2012) May is “Substance Abuse Awareness and Education Month” in Ohio. As communities push back against prescription painkiller abuse and other potentially deadly addictions, the Ohio Department of Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services says now is the perfect time for Ohioans to educate themselves.

“Substance abuse remains one of the most significant and costly public health threats in this state,” said ODADAS Director Orman Hall. “Addiction can affect anyone, anywhere, anytime. Awareness, education and early intervention are critical to helping avoid a lifetime of drug abuse and addiction.”

On April 30, more than 600 youth from around the state helped kick off Substance Abuse Awareness and Education Month with a “We Are the Drug-Free Majority” march through the streets of downtown Columbus that ended with an awareness rally and activities at the Ohio Statehouse. On May 7-8, ODADAS partnered with the Ohio Association of County Behavioral Health Authorities and the Ohio Rehabilitative Services Commission to host the *Ohio Opiate Summit: Miles Traveled, Miles Ahead*. More than 1,600 addiction, criminal justice, medical professionals and policymakers converged in Columbus for the landmark conference that focused on Ohio’s accomplishments and next steps in the fight against opiate addiction.

The Department is also working with Ohio Citizen Advocates for Chemical Dependency Prevention and Treatment and local partners to host a series of regional town hall meetings to promote Ohio’s “Don’t Get Me Started” prescription drug abuse awareness campaign throughout the months of May and June. Meetings have been scheduled for Allen, Athens, Cuyahoga, Franklin, Hamilton, Mahoning and Trumbull counties. Ohioans can learn more about the campaign and take advantage of a treatment locator at www.DontGetMeStartedOhio.org.

Experts agree that learning as much as possible about drugs of abuse and communicating those dangers to others can help insulate families and communities from substance abuse-related problems. The Partnership at Drugfree.org estimates that youth who learn a lot about the dangers of using alcohol and other drugs at home are up to 50 percent less likely to try drugs in the first place.

“Knowledge is power,” said Hall. “The more parents know about the issue, the more effectively they can communicate the risks and consequences with their children. Substance Abuse Awareness and Education Month provides the perfect opportunity to start talking, before they start using.”

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According to the latest national Partnership Attitude Tracking Study (PATS), heavy teen marijuana use (defined as at least 20 times a month) is up 80 percent since 1998 and teen abuse of prescription painkillers and over-the-counter medications remain at dangerous levels.

Moreover, the study said teens who are heavy marijuana users are 15 times more likely to abuse prescription pain relievers, 20 times more likely to use Ecstasy and 30 times more likely to experiment with crack/cocaine.

“These findings are deeply disturbing as the increases we’re seeing in heavy, regular marijuana use among high school students can spell real trouble for these teens later on,” said Steve Pasierb, President and CEO of The Partnership at Drugfree.org. “Heavy use of marijuana brings the risk of serious problems and our data show it is linked to involvement with alcohol and other drugs as well. Kids who begin using drugs or alcohol as teenagers are more likely to struggle with substance use disorders when compared to those who start using after the teenage years.”

“Substance Abuse Awareness and Education Month” was created in September 2011 when Gov. John R. Kasich signed Senate Bill 101 into law. State Sen. Tom Patton (R-Strongsville) served as the chief sponsor of the legislation, which had strong bipartisan support.

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Additional Resources:

Visit the Partnership’s website www.drugfree.org for a free drug identification guide and helpful tips on how to get the conversation started. If you or a loved one needs help for a substance abuse problem, contact your local Alcohol Drug Addiction and Mental Health Services/Alcohol and Drug Addiction Services Board. ODADAS maintains a toll-free helpline – 1-800-788-7254 – for Ohioans seeking more information or localized treatment and recovery services. For a list of publicly-funded treatment facilities in Ohio, visit <http://www.odadas.ohio.gov/Directory/>

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