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Alabamians urged to take part in "Drug Take Back Day"

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MONTGOMERY, AL - The Alabama Department of Mental Health is encouraging the public to participate in the Drug Enforcement Agency's National Prescription Drug Take Back Day by safely discarding of unwanted and unused prescription drugs at collection sites throughout the state.

Take Back Day will be held on Saturday, September 29, 2012, from 10 a.m.-2 p.m.

"National Prescription Drug Take Back Day provides those of us who have amassed containers of unused medications in our homes with an excellent opportunity to eliminate one route of easy access to prescription drugs, which thereby enhances the state's efforts to combat the harmful consequences of prescription drug abuse," says Dr. Beverly Bell-Shambley, associate commissioner for the department's Division of Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services.

Dr. Bell-Shambley adds, "On September 29, more than 65 conveniently located drop-off sites will be accessible throughout the state."

The DEA, along with state, local and tribal law enforcement agencies and community partners, conducted the first ever National Prescription Drug Take Back Day on September 25, 2010. Since then, four Take Back Days have been held in all 50 states and U.S. territories, and more than 1.5 million pounds (774 tons) of medication have been removed from circulation.

In 2011, there were 6.1 million persons (2.4 percent) ages 12 or older who had abused prescription type psychotherapeutic drugs in the past month, according to the 2011 Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Survey on Drug Use and Health. While the survey found that prescription drug abuse among young adults has decreased, the dangerous behavior of abusing prescribed medicines remains unchanged among kids and teens. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, prescription medicines are now the most commonly abused drugs among 12 to 13 year olds, and today more accidental deaths occur from drug overdoses, fueled by prescription painkillers, than from car crashes.

According to Dr. Bell-Shambley, Alabama's youth ages 12 to 17 have exceeded national average estimates for past year nonmedical use of prescription painkillers since SAMHSA began reporting that data in 2002, and drug availability is a recognized risk factor for adolescent substance abuse.

Also underscoring the need for initiatives such as Take Back Day is the fact that prescription drug abuse is the fastest growing drug problem in the U.S. Because of this, the National Governor's Association recently announced a year-long prescription drug abuse initiative, co-chaired by Governor Robert Bentley.

The initiative, also co-chaired by Colorado Governor John Hickenlooper, includes five other states: Arkansas, Kentucky, New Mexico, Oregon and Virginia. Together these states will seek to develop and implement comprehensive and coordinated strategies that take advantage of all available tools



Alabama Attorney General Luther Strange, U.S. Attorney George Beck and Drug Enforcement Administration Assistant Special Agent in Charge Clay Morris announcing the plan Thursday.

and resources to address prescription drug abuse. Bentley said, "We are united by a common goal, and that is to reduce prescription drug abuse. We will work together on appropriate solutions to this problem. At the same time, we will also discuss ways to continue to ensure proper access for those who legitimately need these medications."

INFORMATION SOURCE: Alabama Department of Mental Health



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