

## **Prescription Drug Abuse on the Rise**

### **Issue Description:**

The non-medical use of prescription drugs is a serious public health concern. According to the 2006 National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH), approximately 49.8 million Americans aged 12 or older reported non-medical use of any psychotherapeutic at some point in their lifetimes. Nearly 7 million Americans aged 12 or older reported current (past month) use of psychotherapeutic drugs for non-medical purposes. The National Drug Intelligence Center's 2006 National Drug Threat Survey (NDTS) shows that 78.8% of state and local law enforcement agencies reported either high or moderate availability of illegally diverted pharmaceuticals. While prescription drugs account for the second most commonly abused category of drugs, behind marijuana, many people benefit from the appropriate use of prescription pain killers. Prescription drug abuse poses a unique challenge because of the need to balance prevention, education, and enforcement, with the need for legitimate access to controlled prescription drugs.

### **Recommended Tactics/Strategies for Addressing the Issue:**

- In response to the prevalence of the misuse and abuse of prescription drugs, several states have implemented Prescription Drug Monitoring Programs (PDMPs). PDMPs help prevent and detect the diversion and abuse of pharmaceutical controlled substances, particularly at the retail level where no other automated information collection exists.
- States with PDMPs have the capability to collect and analyze prescription data much more efficiently than states without such programs, where the collection of prescription information requires the manual review of pharmacy files, a very time-consuming process.
- Since fiscal year 2002, Congress has appropriated funds to the U.S. Department of Justice to support these programs through the Harold Rogers Prescription Drug Monitoring Program, which is administered by the Bureau of Justice Assistance (BJA). The purpose of this grant program is to enhance the capacity of regulatory and law enforcement agencies to collect and analyze controlled substance prescription data.
- The Harold Rogers program focuses on providing assistance to states that want to establish or enhance a PDMP. Program objectives can include building a data collection and analysis system at the state level, enhancing existing programs' ability to analyze and use collected data, facilitating the exchange of collected prescription data between states, and assessing the efficiency and effectiveness of the programs funded under this initiative.
- Since inception of the grant program, over 100 grants have been awarded to states to support their efforts to plan, implement, or enhance a PDMP. Prior to fiscal year

2002, there were 15 states operating PDMPs. Since the inception of the grant program, this funding opportunity has resulted in 21 states receiving new program grants and 13 states receiving planning grants. Today, there are 33 states with active or planned PDMPs.

**Available Resources:**

[BJA Harold Rogers Prescription Drug Monitoring Program](#)

[National Drug Intelligence Center, 2009 National Drug Threat Assessment Section on Controlled Prescription Drugs](#)

[Office of National Drug Control Policy prescription drug abuse webpage](#)

[National Alliance for Model State Drug Laws Prescription Drug Monitoring Project](#)

[The Partnership for a Drug-Free America](#)

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