

Prescription Drug Misuse



Madison
County

Community Report

June 2011

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2011, responding to national research about increased use by young people, the Faith Task Force of Madison County initiated the collection of data around prescription drug use/misuse. The group sponsored high school youth focus groups as a means to gather qualitative data on what is happening in Madison County. This report provides some insight into the identified prescription drug problem within Madison County. The 103 youth who participated indicated an understanding of the possible negative consequences of prescription drug misuse along with seeing medicine cabinets and friends as sources of access to prescription medications. "Pain killers" i.e. Lortab, Percocet, Ativan, etc. were believed to be the most commonly abused medication while family members, trusted adults and counselors were seen as sources of support and help in dealing with addiction.

This report also includes results from a community survey that targeted parents. Though this was a multi-county survey, Madison County had the largest percentage of respondents of any county.

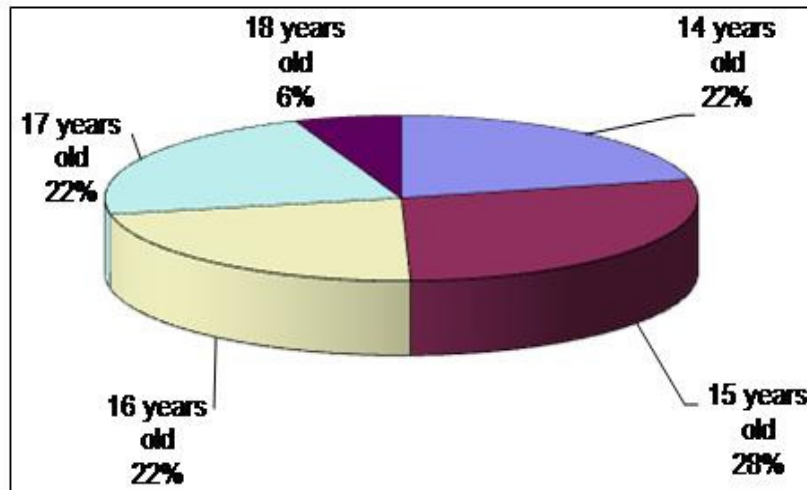
The community survey focused on the attitudes, perceptions and practices around prescription drugs from the adult perspective. Gathered data indicated that the survey participants believe it is harmful for adults and young people to abuse prescription medications as well as indicating a level of understanding safeguards to limit access to them. To combat the issue, respondents believed that education was the best approach.

TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Methodology/Demographics

In February 2011, 16 focus groups were conducted with high school youth of Madison County. Youth were asked a series of fifteen questions on prescription drug misuse, focusing on their attitudes and perceptions on the subject.

A total of 103 youth participated in the focus groups. Forty-seven of the participants were female and fifty-six were male. Of the 47 female participants, 26 were Caucasian, 16 were African American, 2 were Asian and 3 were Hispanic. Of the 56 male participants, 30 were Caucasian, 20 were African American, 4 were Asian, and 2 were Hispanic.



TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 1:

Who do you think uses prescription drugs without a doctor's consent? Do you think it is illegal? Do you think it is safe or unsafe to use prescription drugs without a doctor's consent?

- The majority of respondents gave a general answer that anyone can misuse prescription medications. Some identified specific groups including teens, early twenties, parents, older adults, addicts, and people who are injured.
- All 103 participants stated that it is illegal or should be illegal to misuse prescriptions.
- In terms of safety, teens thought that misuse harms users physically and mentally IF not used properly, i.e. not prescribed by your doctor or taken according to the directions.

TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 2:

What makes young people want to try prescription drugs? What is appealing about them?

- All participants indicated that peer pressure played a role in the appeal of prescription drug misuse.
- Relief of pain/stress.
- A large portion of the teens reported ease of access with prescription drugs.
- Another common response was a misperception that prescription drugs are safer than harder drugs.
- Another common theme in the responses was that the “high” prescription drugs produce is different than that of other drugs.
- The indicated perception of “others look happy, TV shows people feeling good, it takes the sadness away, to get away from problems” was voiced by participants.
- Curiosity, especially when told by others that use “is awesome”.

TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 3:

We have heard from many young people that stress is a factor in using and abusing drugs.
How do your friends deal with stress?

- Sports / exercise / lifting weights
- Talk to someone close to them
- Take it out on others
- Use drugs, alcohol or cigarettes
- Cut self, attempt suicide, self injury
- Creative outlets, such as poetry, reading, journaling, school activities
- Relax, watch television, listen to music, read, sleep, do something to get it out
- Don't deal with it or let anyone know
- Hide it

TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 4:

Close to 1/2 of all teens believe that using prescription medications to get high is much safer than using streets drugs; in addition, almost 1/2 of teens say prescription painkillers are not addictive.

Why do you think this is?

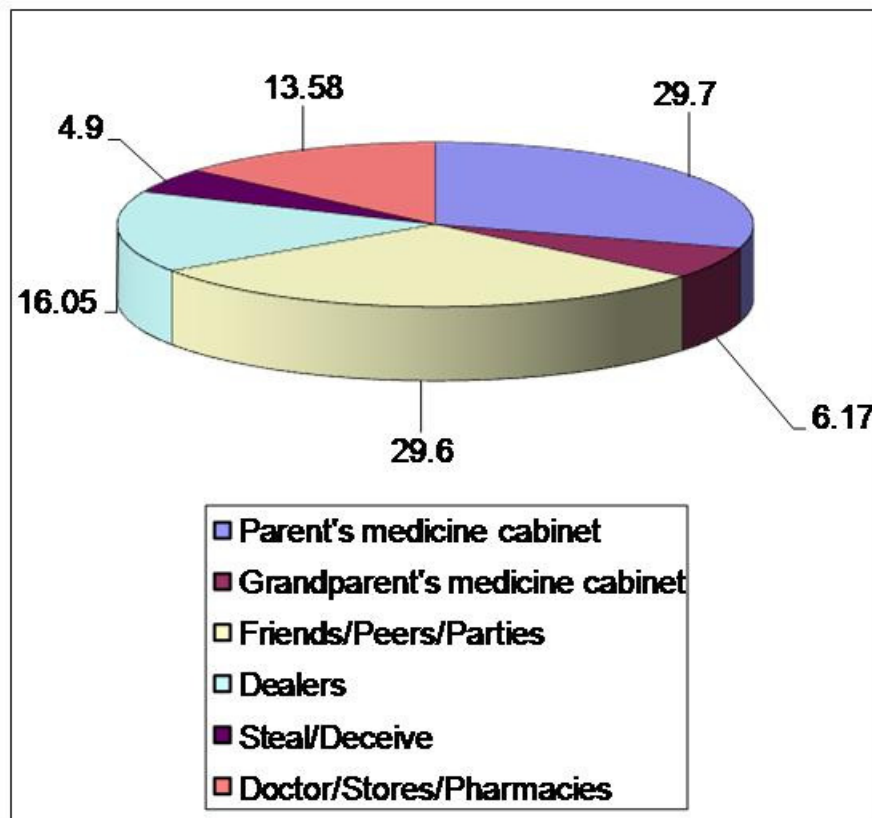
- The teens appear to understand that prescription drugs are in fact addictive and not safer to use than street drugs.
- They also indicated that prescription drugs are just 'easier to get'.
- They cited misperceptions that it is safer because of being prescribed by a doctor, and not illegal. "It's harder to know you're doing something wrong since people aren't telling you it's bad like they do about street drugs".
- "People in Richmond think there is no drug problem here; It's bigger than people want to think."

TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 5:

Where do you think high schoolers get prescription drugs that are not prescribed for them?

- A total of 81 responses were recorded for this question. The chart below indicates the percentage of responses corresponding to each area of access to prescription drugs.

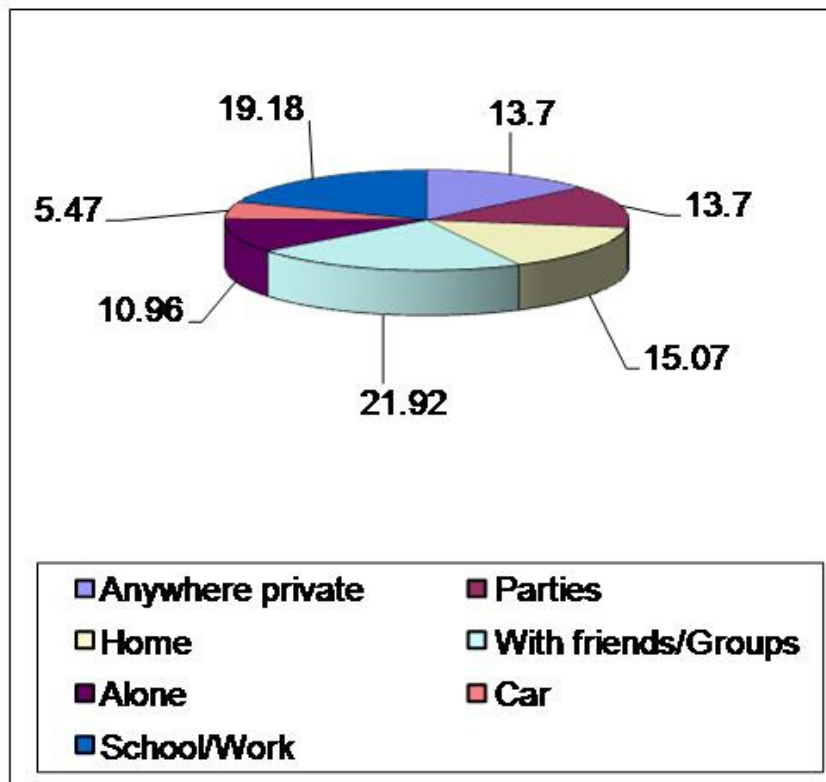


TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 6:

Where do you think young people use prescription drugs? Do they use them by themselves or with other people?

- A total of 73 responses were recorded for this question. The chart below indicates the percentage of responses corresponding to each place of use of prescription drugs.



TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 7:

What have you heard about young people taking prescription drugs without a doctor's consent?

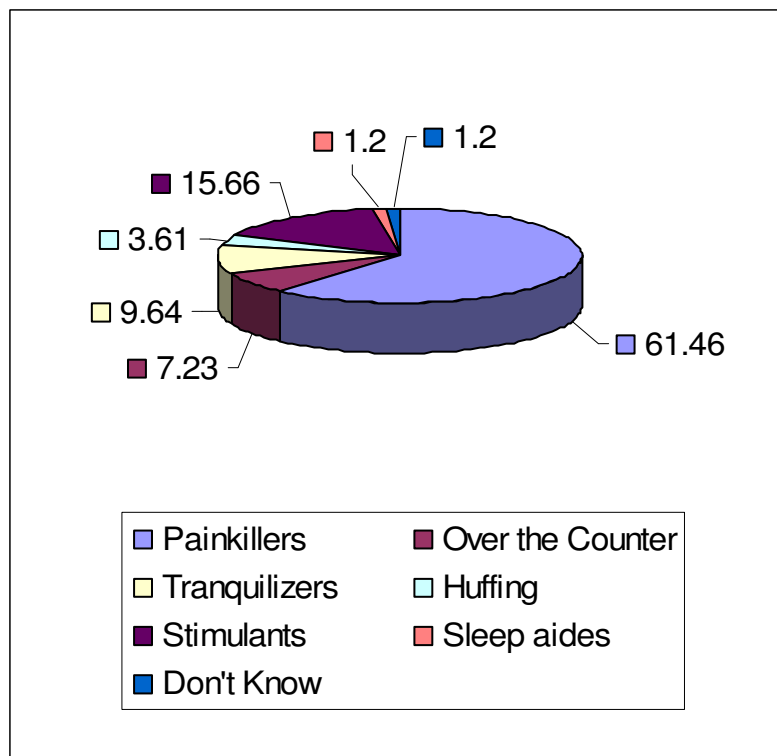
- The vast majority of participants were aware of the possible ramifications of misusing prescription drugs and knew someone who had dealt with an addiction issue.
- A few teens indicated that they have not heard much about prescription drug misuse from a school source or parents.
- Some indicated that it appears to be more of an adult issue and few youth are misusing prescription drugs.
- That prescription drugs are better than what you get off the streets and are safer.

TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 8:

Are there any prescription drugs that you have heard are abused more often than others?

- A total of 83 responses were recorded for this question. The chart below indicates the percentage of responses corresponding to each prescription drug of misuse.

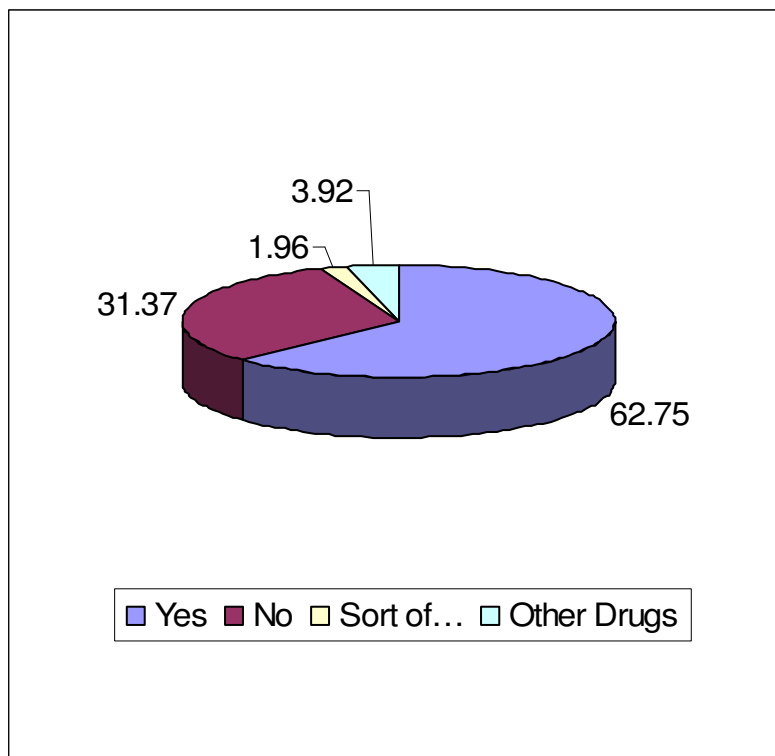


TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 9:

Do you know anyone who has gotten caught taking prescription drugs without a doctor's consent?

- A total of 51 responses were recorded for this question. The chart below indicates the percentage corresponding to each response.



TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 10:

Why do you think some people get caught using prescription drugs and others don't?

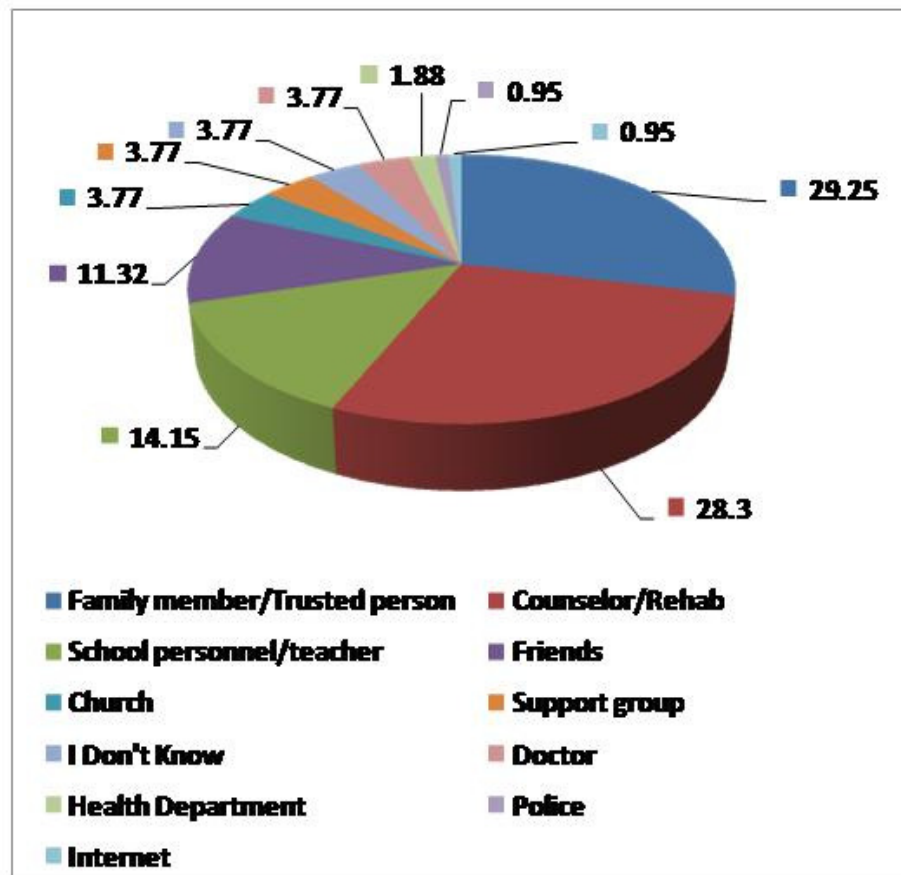
- Participants indicated that some individuals are more adept at hiding their behaviors while others are not.
- The teens stated that individuals may brag about it or tell too many people.
- Some misusing prescription drugs may be pleading for help through their behaviors.
- People with an addiction are sometimes less concerned with hiding their behaviors.
- Some want to get caught and get suspended.
- Others may want the attention as a way to look "cool".

TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 11:

Where could a person go to for help if he or she was struggling with the abuse of prescription drugs?

- A total of 106 responses were recorded for this question. The chart below indicates the percentage corresponding to each response.

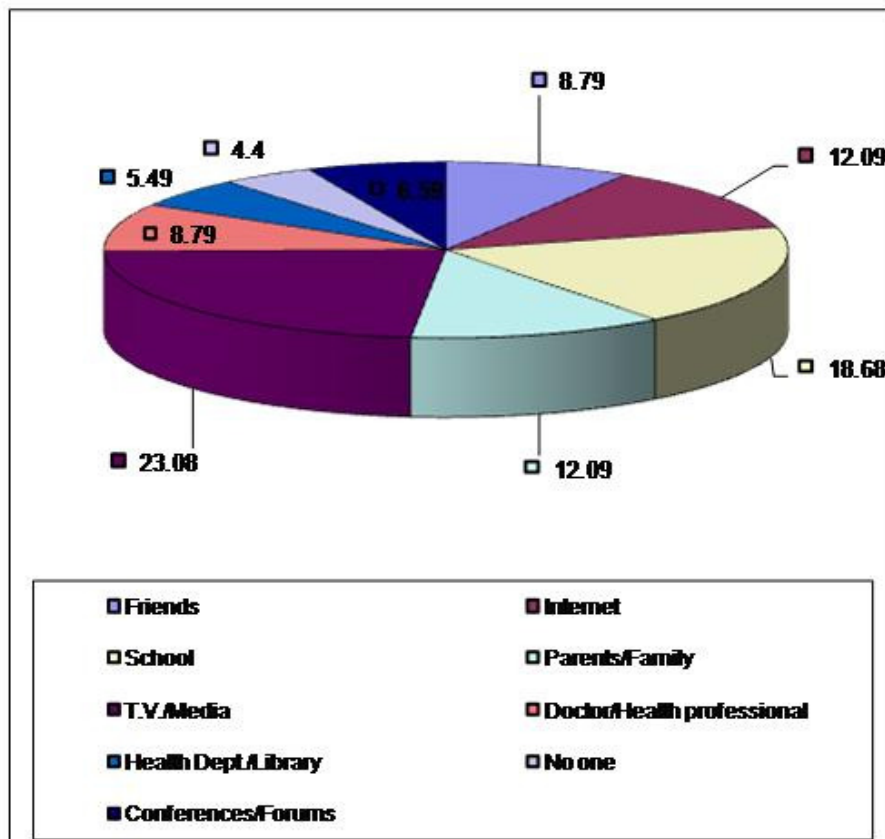


TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 12:

Where do you get your facts about prescription drugs?

- A total of 91 responses were recorded for this question. The chart below indicates the percentage corresponding to each response.

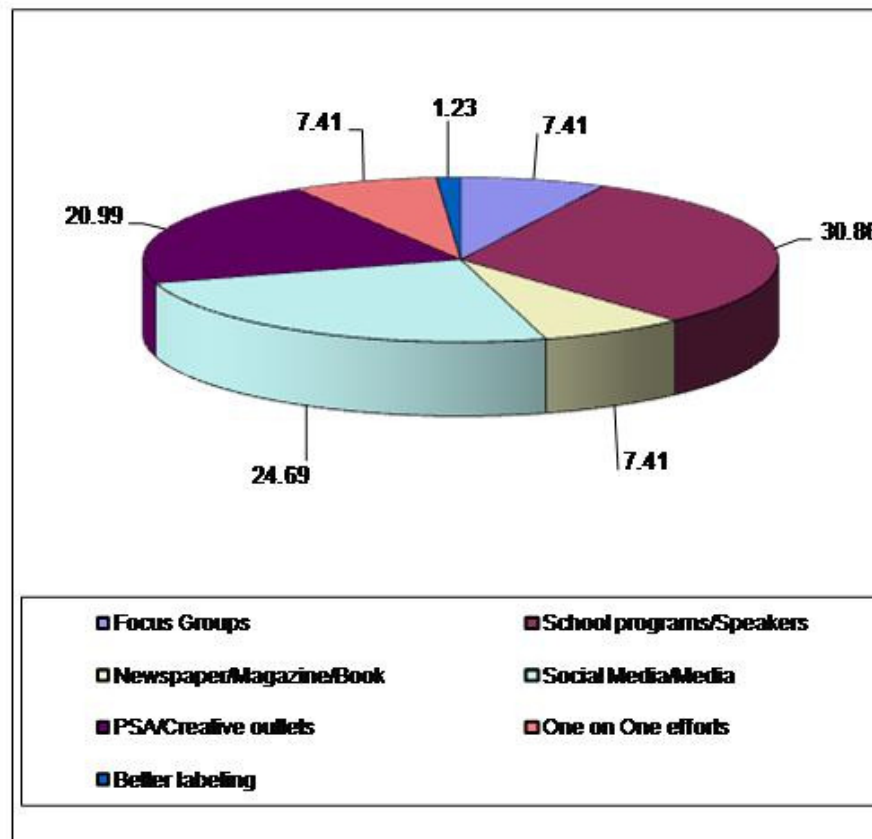


TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 13:

What would be the best way to get information out to young people about the dangers of abusing prescription drugs?

- A total of 81 responses were recorded for this question. The chart below indicates the percentage corresponding to each response.

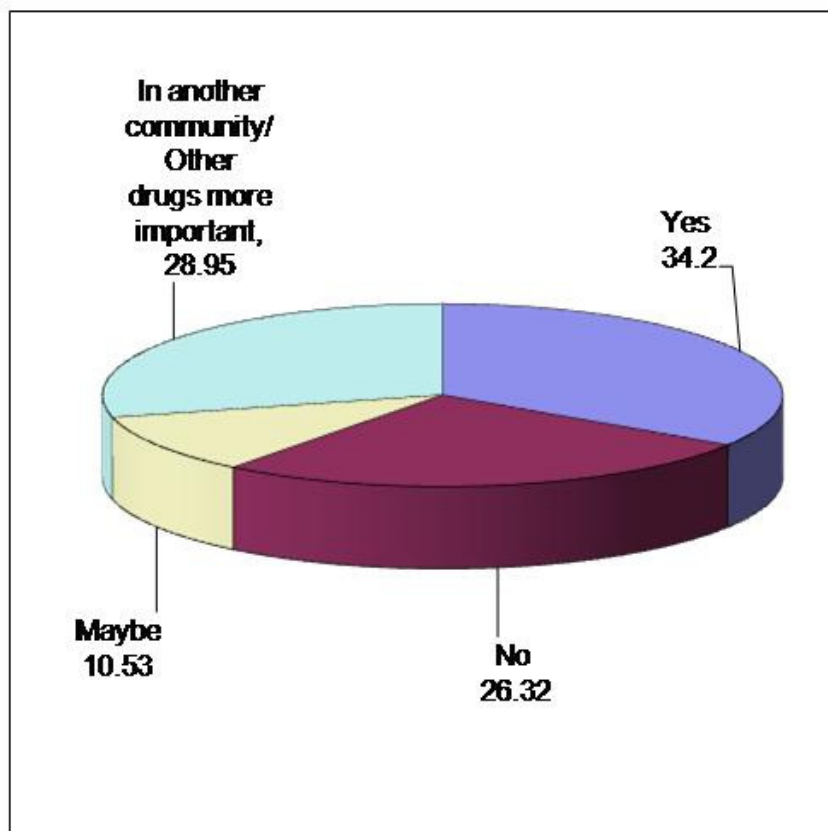


TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 14:

Do you think prescription drug abuse is a top concern to be addressed in your community?

- A total of 38 responses were recorded for this question. The chart below indicates the percentage corresponding to each response.



TEEN FOCUS GROUPS

Question 15:

If you were coming up with a campaign on prescription drugs, what messages would be the best to get across to people your age?

- Participants indicated that people need to know that prescription drugs are just as dangerous as other drugs.
- You only have one life.
- Anyone can get addicted.
- True stories of addiction.
- Effects of misuse of prescription drugs.
- Don't take drugs not prescribed to you.
- Videos, P.S.A.'s, billboards, Ghost Outs, video chats, etc.
- Get kids involved in the process of creating the messaging.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

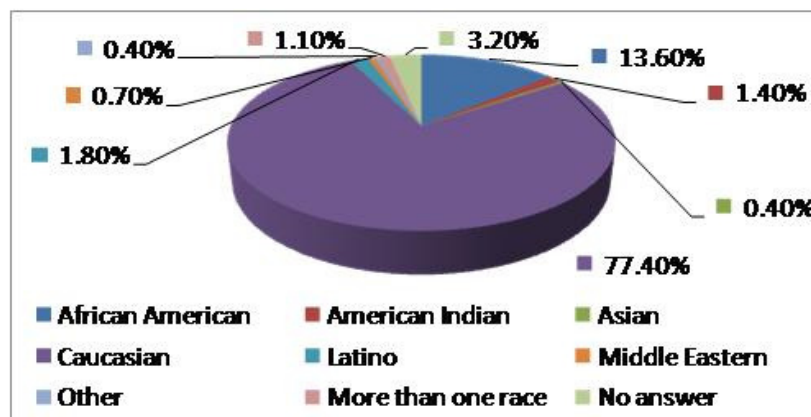
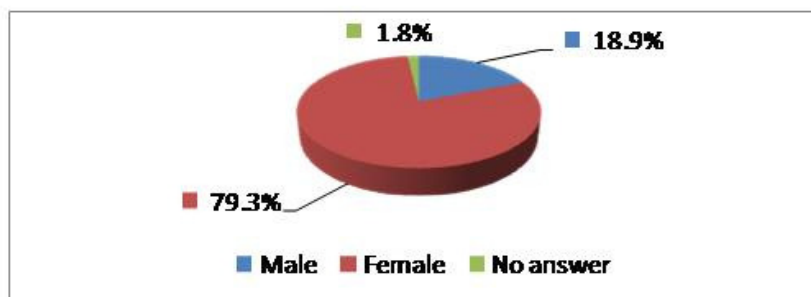
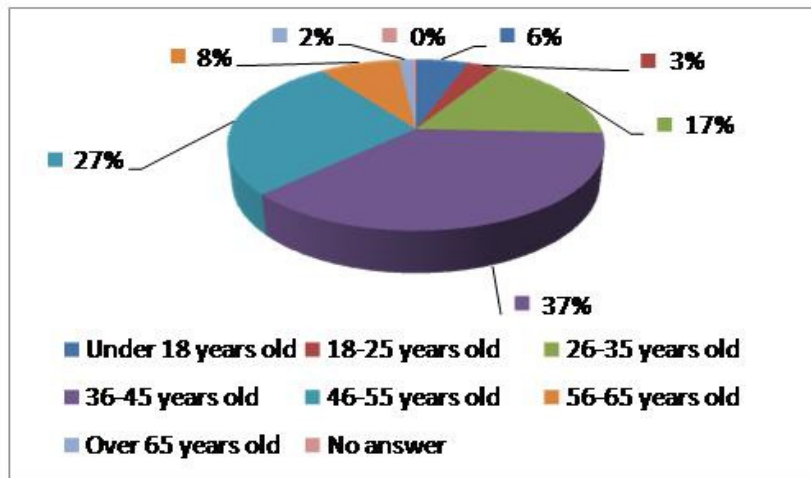
Methodology

In March 2011, an online prescription drug survey was sent out to community partners across the Bluegrass region. The target population was adults/parents. Additionally, a paper and pen version was administered to some counties. This paper and pen survey was completed by the majority of counties in the region, with 25.6% residing in Madison County. Specifically, 70 out of the 281 respondents reside in Madison County.

The information gathered from adults provides a more complete picture of the attitudes, behavior, and beliefs of the community as a whole when considered along with the youth responses.

COMMUNITY SURVEY

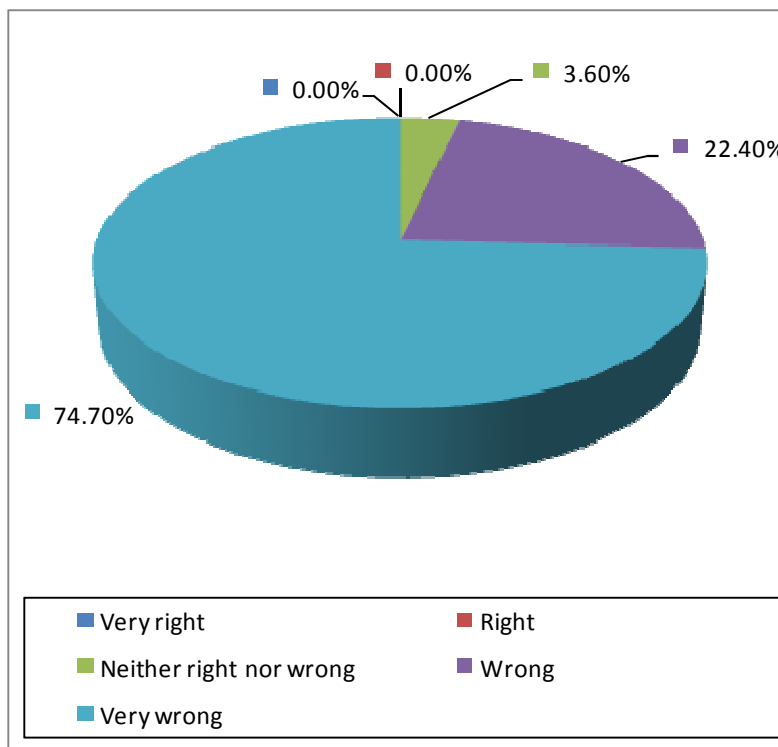
Demographics



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 1:

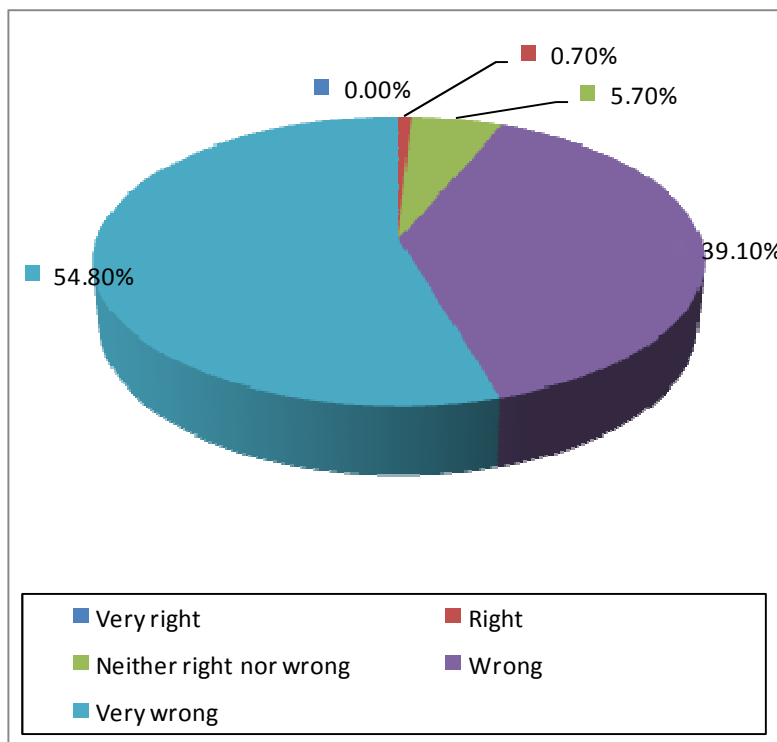
In your opinion, is it right or wrong for a young person (middle/high school) to take prescription drugs that were not prescribed to him/her?



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 2:

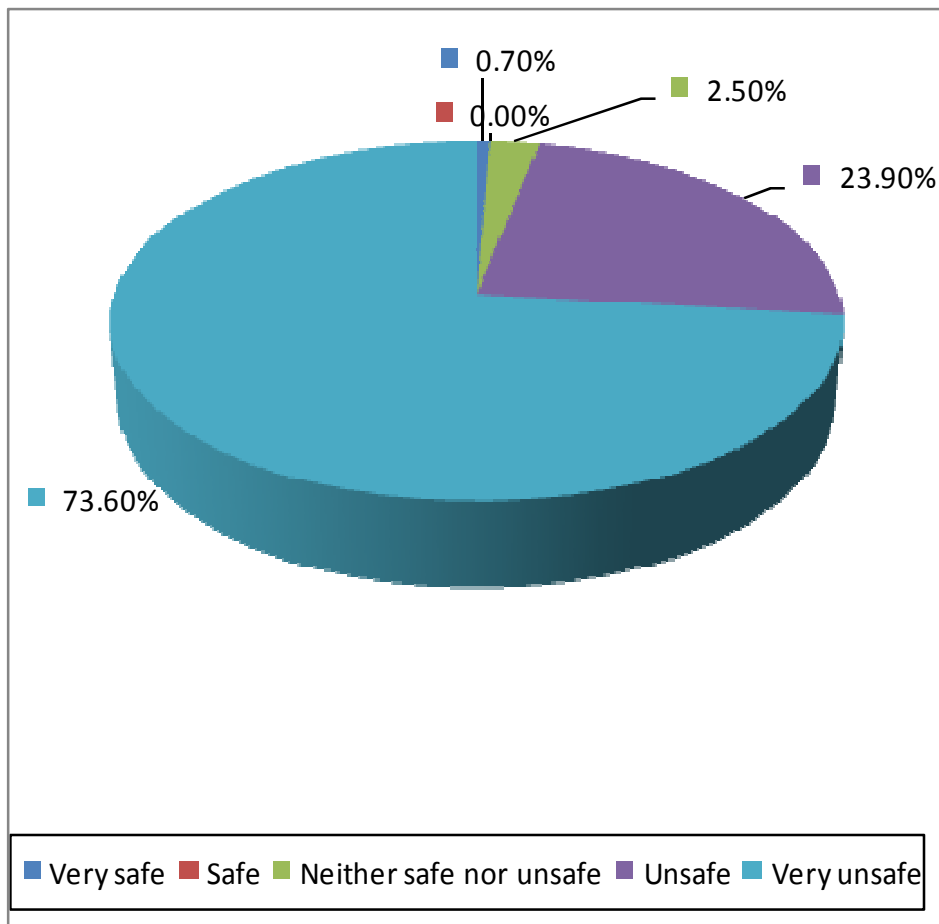
In your opinion, is it right or wrong for an adult to take prescription drugs that are not prescribed specifically for them?



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 3:

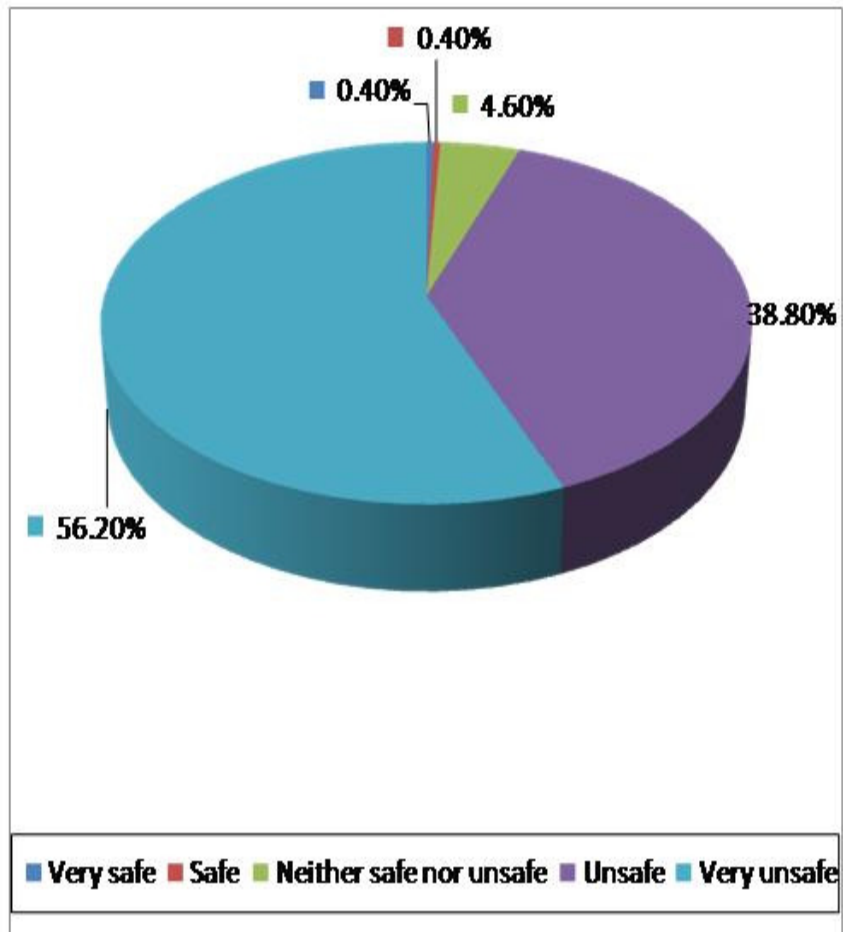
Is it safe or harmful for a young person (middle/high school) to take prescription drugs that were not prescribed to him/her?



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 4:

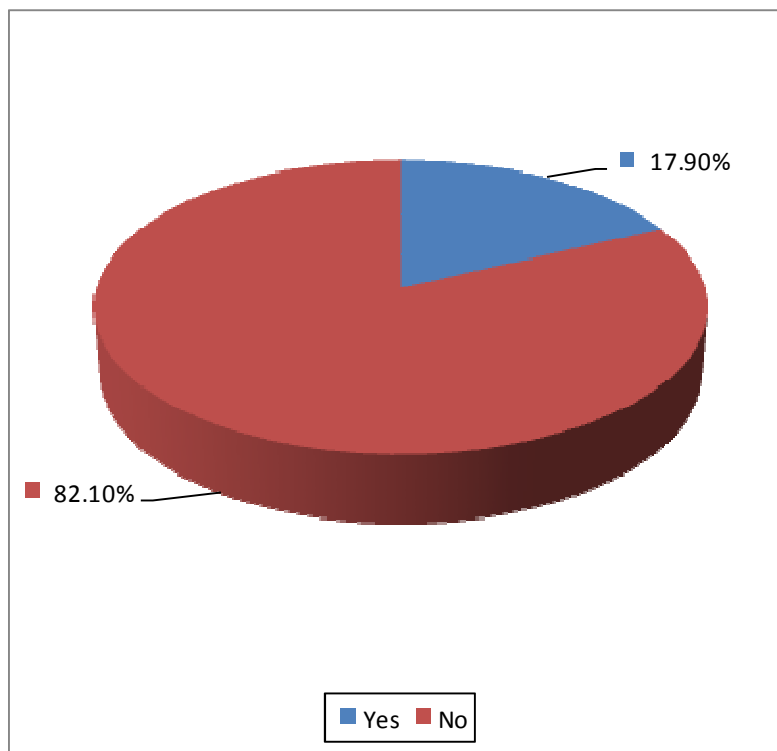
In your opinion, is it safe or harmful for an adult to take prescription drugs that were not prescribed to him/her?



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 5:

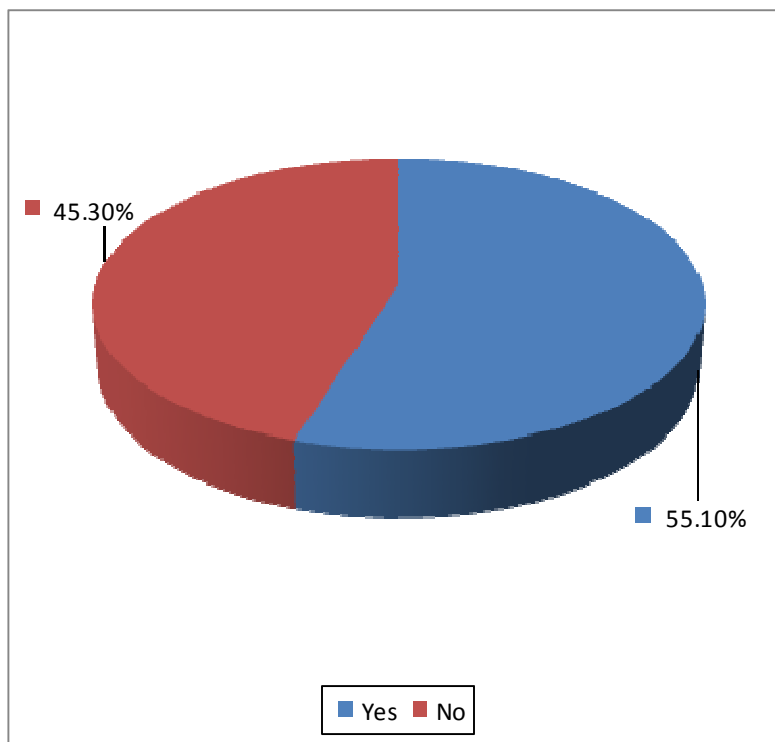
Is it safer to take prescription drugs without a prescription than it is to take illegal drugs?



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 6:

Do you think that prescription drug abuse is a problem at your child's school?

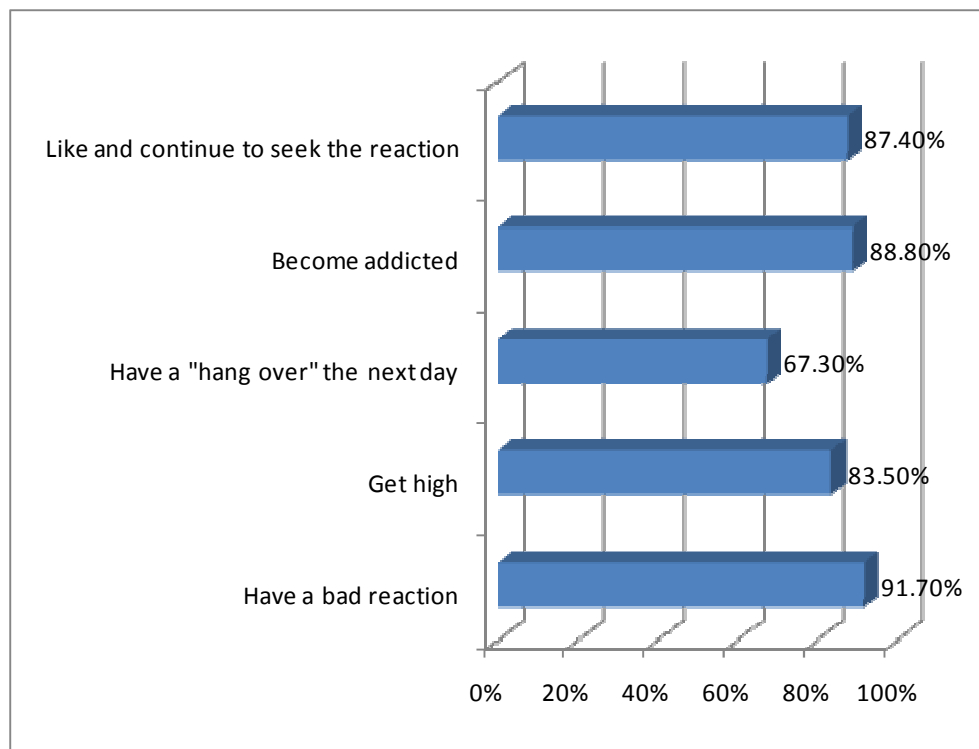


COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 7:

Which of the following could happen to a young person (middle/high school) who used prescription drugs that were not prescribed for them?

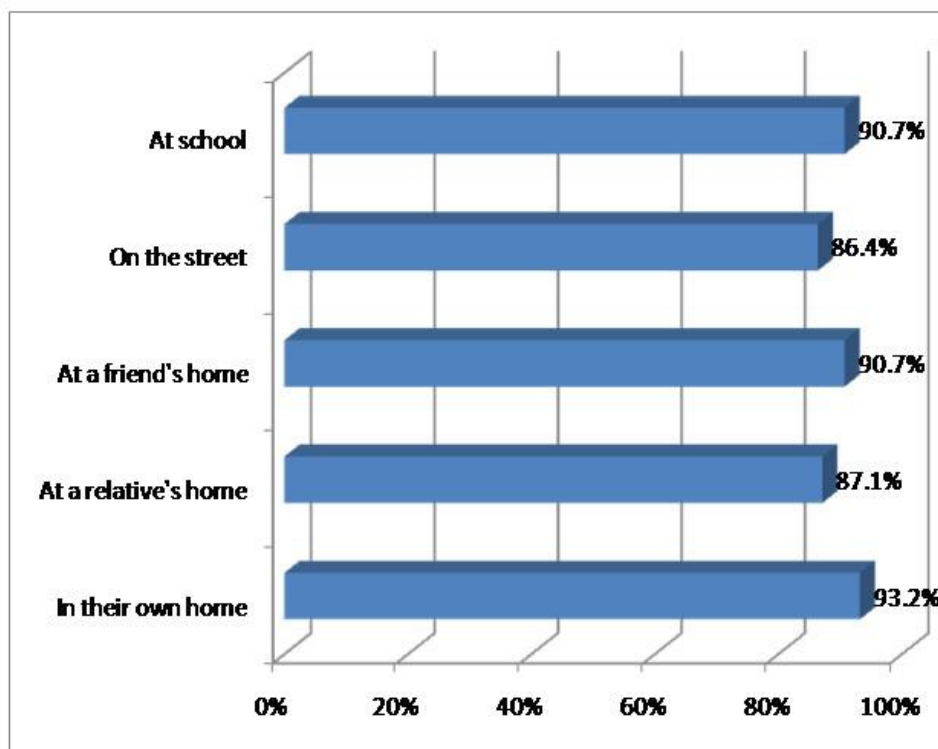
Choose all that apply.



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 8:

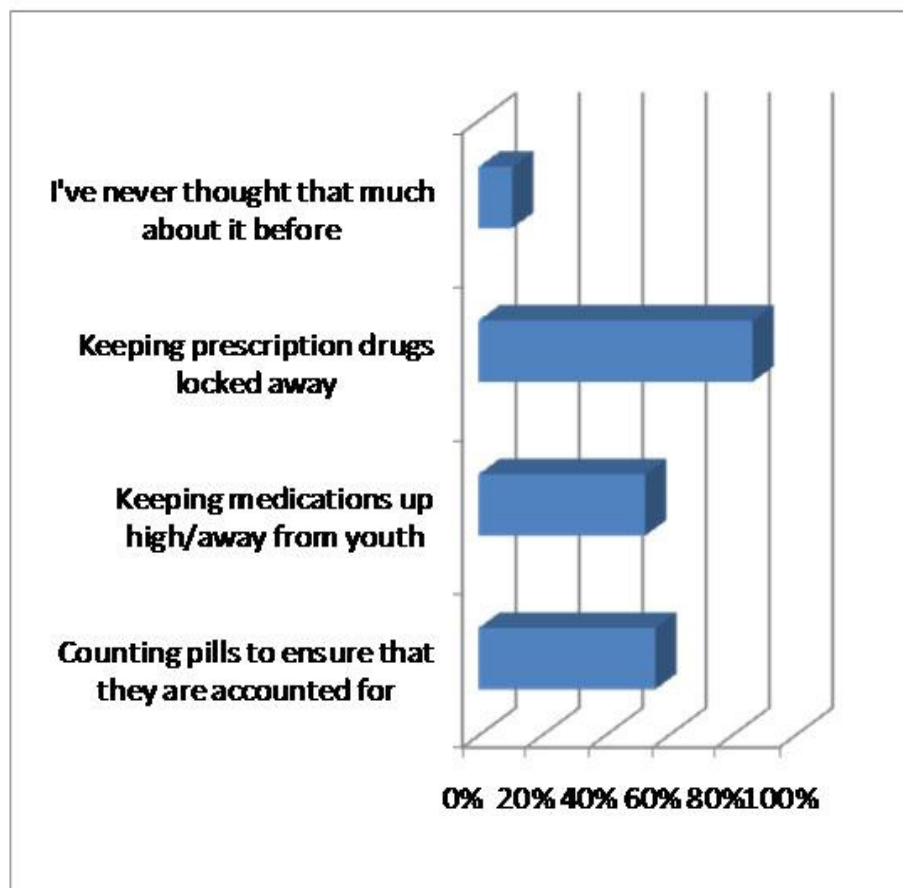
Where do you think young people might have access to prescription drugs?
Choose all that apply.



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 9:

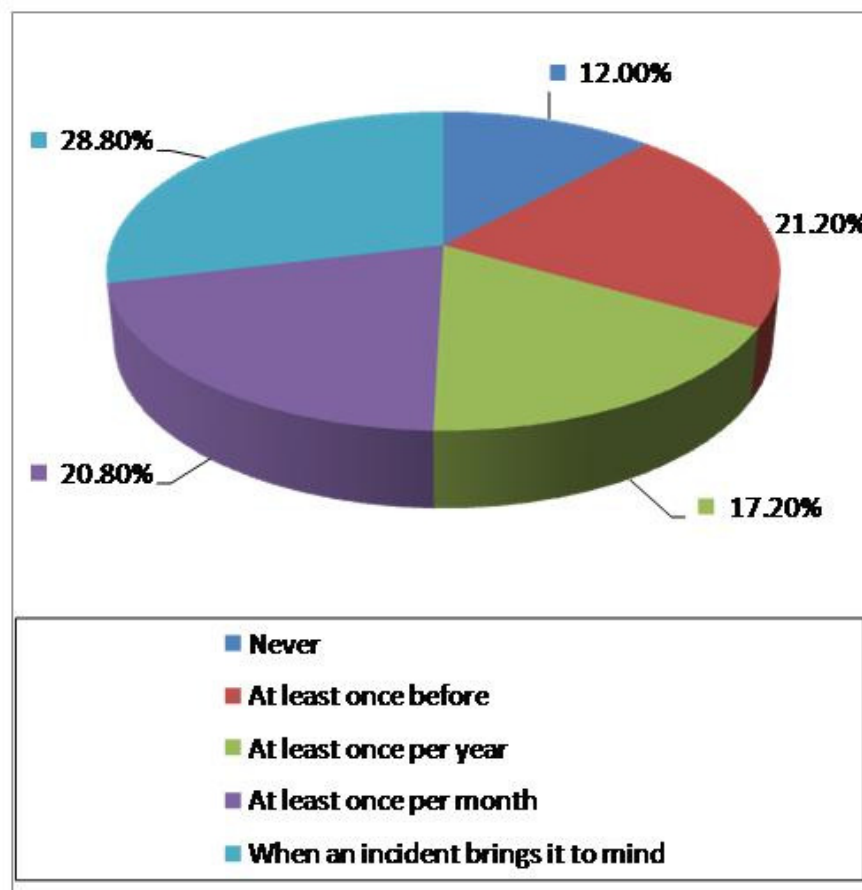
How should an adult keep prescription drugs safe in their own home?
Choose all that apply.



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 10:

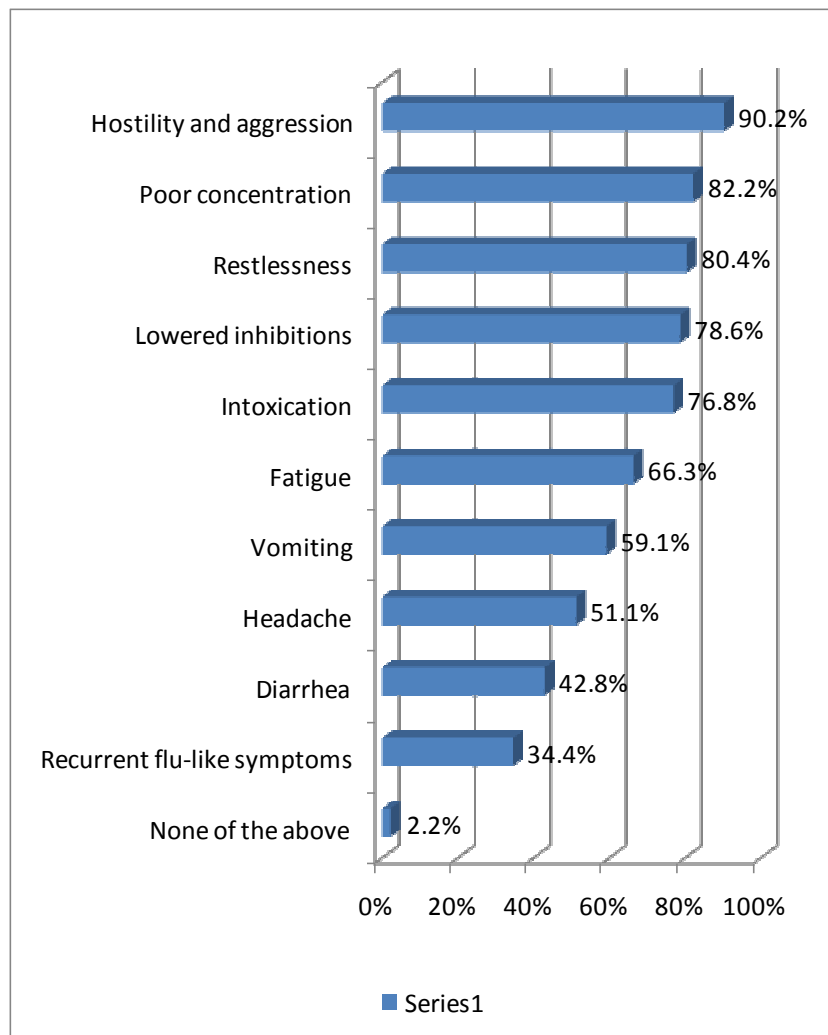
How often have you talked to your child(ren) about the dangers of prescription drug abuse?



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 11:

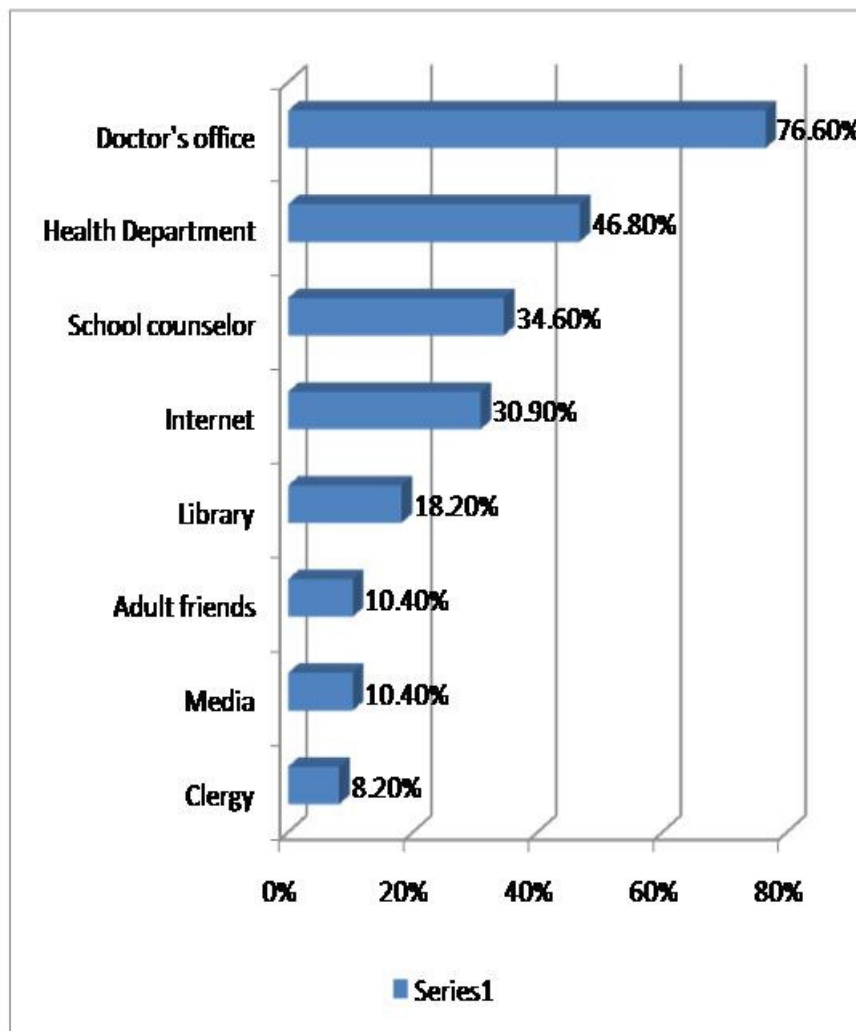
Which of the following would you recognize as signs or symptoms of prescription drug abuse?
Choose all that apply.



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 12:

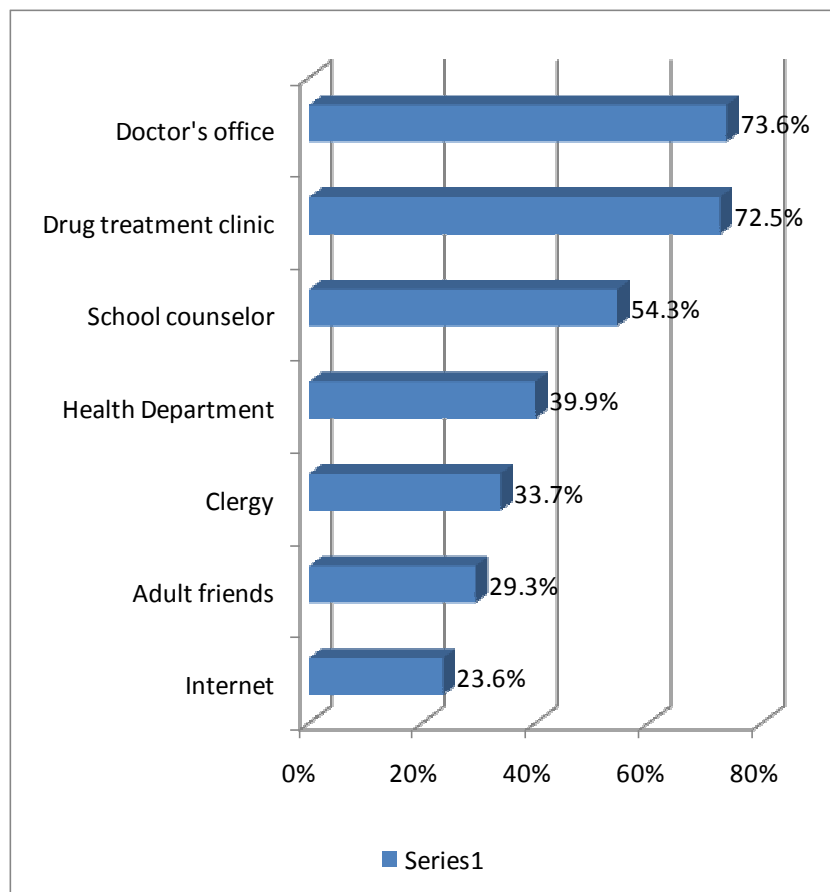
Which is the most reliable source for parents seeking information on prescription drug abuse?



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 13:

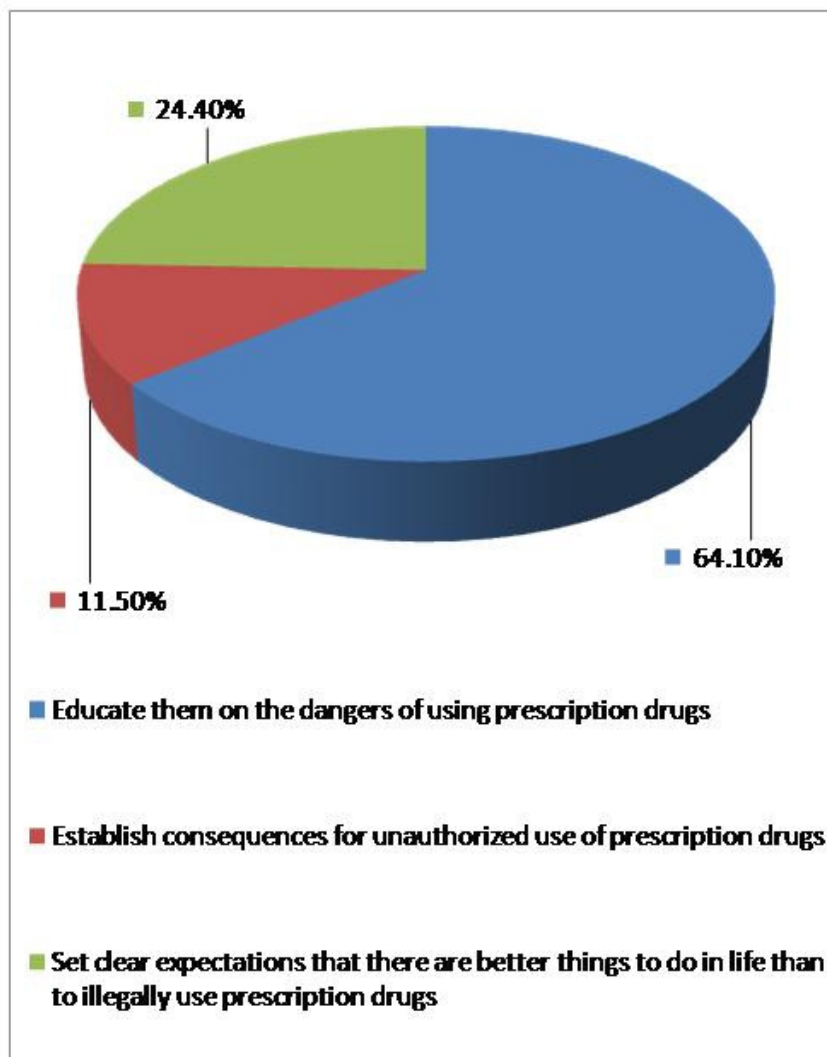
Where could you go for help if someone you care about is dealing with prescription drug abuse?
Choose all that apply.



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 14:

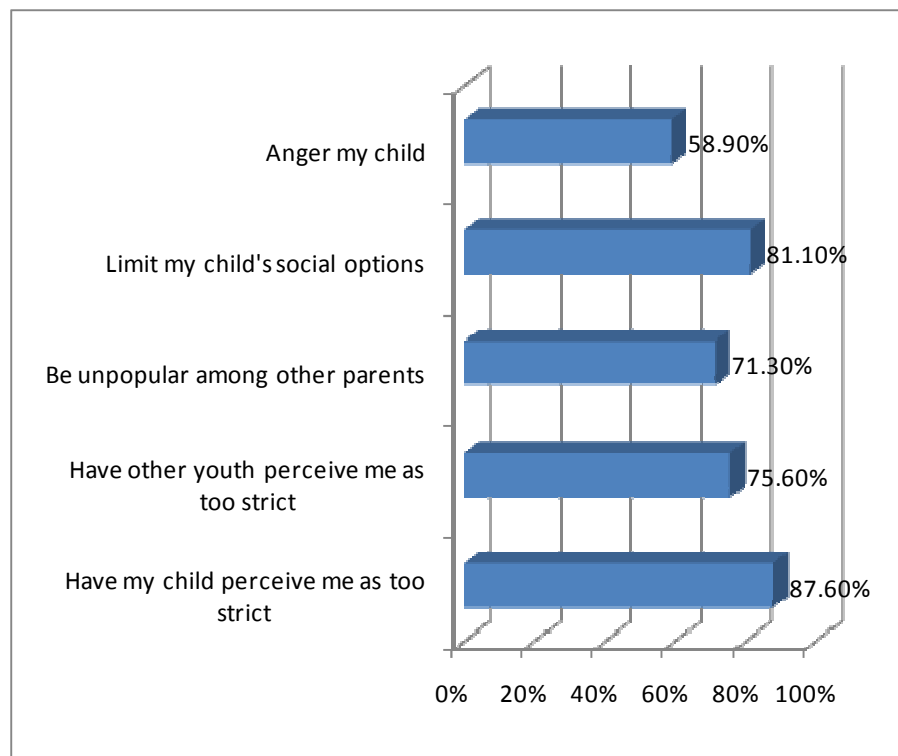
I believe the best way to keep young people safe is to:



COMMUNITY SURVEY

Question 15:

In an effort to reduce my child's exposure to prescription drug abuse, I am willing to...
(please choose all that apply).



RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the available data within this book, the following recommendations may prove beneficial for Madison County.

- Confusion remains around addiction and its consequences. Providing consistent and persistent information on the addiction process and its phases seems a priority.
- Other communities within Bluegrass region have seen an increase in past 30 day use of prescription drugs within the 8th and 10th grade cohorts. It seems advisable to assume that targeted prevention in those grades would be beneficial.
- Participating in a school survey such as the statewide KIP school survey would provide a level of quantitative data on use that is now missing.
- The community survey clearly identified doctors' offices, treatment centers, school counselors and the health department as sources of information and help. Strong collaboration with such institutions in distributing current information and educational material seems necessary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The community survey also indicated the belief that education is the best way to keep young people safe from prescription drug misuse (64.1% of respondents). Youth indicated that such events as the Teen Forum are beneficial. Additionally, utilization of the internet (specifically Facebook, Twitter, Blogs) was identified as main avenues of information and education. Youth also indicated that guest speakers who can present current, factual stories would gather attention. A collaborative effort to have consistent and continuous messaging is paramount.
- The creation of a Prescription Drug Task Force for Madison County would ensure collaboration, consistent messaging and unified strategies for the county as a whole, increasing the ability to address the prescription drug misuse systematically and effectively.

NOTES

This report was compiled by
Bluegrass Prevention Center, a program of
Bluegrass Regional MHMR Board.

If you would like more information on
Prescription Drug Misuse/Abuse,
please contact us at:



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PO Box 13670
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Phone: 859-225-3296
1-866-213-8739

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

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Bluegrass Comprehensive Care Center

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Madison County Agency for Substance Abuse Policy (ASAP)

Jennifer Webb, Chair

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Madison County Health Department

(859) 623-7312

Liberty Place Recovery Center for Women

(859) 625-0104

Alcoholic Beverage Control

(502) 564-4850

Madison County Sheriff's Department

(859) 623-1511

Richmond Police Department

(859) 623-8911

Berea Police Department

(859) 986-8456