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**Contact: Ray Bullman, 301-340-3940
Amanda Crowe, 203-829-6219**

Campaign Launches to Sound Alarm about the Misuse of Prescription Drugs Among Teens
New Resources Equip Parents, Teachers, Coaches, Health Professionals and Other Teen Influencers with Tools to Prevent Teens from Abusing Prescription Drugs

The National Council on Patient Information and Education (NCPIE), along with the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and representatives from 15 nationally recognized prevention, health professional and child advocacy organizations, are launching *Maximizing Your Role as a Teen Influencer: What You Can Do to Help Prevent Teen Prescription Drug Abuse*.

Although the use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs among youth has declined from 2002 through 2008, over this time many teens have turned to misusing prescription drugs, according to SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health. In fact, prescription drugs are misused more by this age group than any illicit drug, except marijuana. The nonmedical use of these medicines—the very same drugs used to legitimately relieve pain, and treat conditions like anxiety, depression, sleep disorders, or ADHD in some people—is a growing and under-recognized problem that puts young lives at risk.

“Prescription drugs found in home medicine cabinets across the country have become the new drug of choice among teens, and *every* teen is at risk,” says Ray Bullman, Executive Vice President of NCPIE. “This initiative gives teen influencers—anyone who interacts with teens on a regular basis and can have a positive influence—the tools to help prevent prescription drug abuse in their school districts and communities. It also provides tips for delivering consistent prevention messages to teens at home, at school, on the field or during health-related visits.”

“While the National Survey on Drug Use and Health shows recent, significant declines in misuse of prescription drugs, we must maintain our focus and continue to drive the rates down even further,” says Eric Broderick, D.D.S., M.P.H., SAMHSA's Acting Administrator. “Joining forces with NCPIE will help continue the momentum.”

“These tools are essential for engaging youth and the adults who come in contact with them through a solid message that prescription misuse is dangerous and can be fatal,” adds H. Westley Clark, M.D., J.D., M.P.H., CAS, FASAM, Director of SAMHSA's Center for Substance Abuse Treatment.

Unlike other forms of adolescent drug use, the desire to feel good or get high ranks much lower as a motivation for prescription drug misuse. Experts note that adolescents are turning to prescription drugs not just for recreational use—they are turning to prescription drugs to help manage their daily lives. The reasons include to lower stress and anxiety, boost their mood, stay up all night studying for an exam, or to enhance academic or athletic performance. According to the 2007 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study conducted by the Partnership for a Drug-Free America, dealing with pressures and managing school-related stress is cited as the number one reason teens use prescription drugs.

The statistics regarding teen drug use are startling. Consider these facts:

- 1 in 5 teens (or 4.5 million) has abused prescription drugs, according to the Partnership for a Drug Free America
- 1 in 3 teens report knowing someone who abuses prescription drugs, according to the Partnership for a Drug-Free America's 2007 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study.
- 1 in 3 teens surveyed says there is “nothing wrong” when using prescription drugs “every once and a while,” according to the Partnership for a Drug-Free America's 2007 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study.
- Every day, 2,700 teens abuse a prescription drug for the first time, according to SAMHSA's National Survey on Drug Use and Health.
- 8 out of 10 teens who misuse prescription drugs get the drugs from friends or relatives through a number of means including stealing, buying or simply asking for the drugs, according to the Partnership for a Drug-Free America's 2007 Partnership Attitude Tracking Study.

The comprehensive online resource, *Maximizing Your Role as a Teen Influencer*, offers a complete workshop module to educate and equip teen influencers—parents, grandparents, teachers, coaches, community and school-based healthcare providers and others—with credible information about teen prescription drug abuse and effective strategies to take action to help prevent it.

The *Maximizing Your Role as a Teen Influencer* toolkit includes complete workshop materials and instructions, as well as real-life scenarios, warning signs and symptoms, common myths about teen prescription drug abuse, brochures and sample promotional materials. This resource was developed with the guidance and insight of an esteemed group of experts, and is available for download at www.talkaboutrx.org.

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NCPIE and SAMHSA are solely responsible for the content, and maintain editorial control, of all materials and publications produced.

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About the National Council on Patient Information and Education

NCPIE is a nonprofit organization formed in 1982. NCPIE's mission is to stimulate and improve communication of information on the appropriate use of medicines to consumers and healthcare professionals. For more information, visit www.talkaboutrx.org.

About the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA)

SAMHSA is a public health agency within the Department of Health and Human Services. The agency is responsible for improving the accountability, capacity and effectiveness of the nation's substance abuse prevention, addictions treatment, and mental health services delivery system. Please visit www.samhsa.gov for more information on SAMHSA and its programs.

More about *Maximizing Your Role as a Teen Influencer: What You Can Do to Help Prevent Teen Prescription Drug Abuse*

This toolkit and accompanying materials aim to:

- Educate teen influencers about teen prescription drug abuse—the extent of the problem, what motivates teens to misuse or abuse prescription drugs, how they gain access to these drugs, warning signs and symptoms of abuse.
- Dispel popular myths about prescription drug use and abuse.
- Reinforce the powerful role that teen influencers can play in educating teens about the dangers of prescription drug abuse and helping to promote healthy alternatives.
- Provide tips for talking with teens and identifying teachable moments.
- Inspire participants to take action against prescription drug abuse, whether it's talking about it with teens they interact with, implementing efforts within their own schools or practices, engaging other teen influencers or offering to give this presentation to others.

Project Advisory Team

NCPIE and SAMHSA wish to recognize the following organizations for their time, insights and dedication to helping to address this issue:

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The Generation Rx Initiative/Ohio State University College of Pharmacy
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National Association of Health Education Centers
National Association of School Nurses
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of State Alcohol & Drug Abuse Directors, Inc.
National Parent Teacher Association (PTA)
The Partnership for a Drug-Free America
Society for Adolescent Medicine
Students Against Destructive Decisions, Inc.
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