



American Drug Testing

Drug-Free Workplace Programs

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DRUG-FREE WORKPLACE ADVISOR

AN ONGOING SERIES TO PROTECT YOUR COMPANY BY HELPING TO KEEP DRUGS OUT OF YOUR WORK-

Dramatic Rise in Painkiller Drug Abuse

U.S. officials reported a 400 percent increase over 10 years in the proportion of Americans treated for prescription painkiller abuse and said on Thursday the problem cut across age groups, geography and income. The dramatic jump was higher than treatment admission rates for methamphetamine abuse, which doubled, and marijuana, which increased by almost half, according to figures from the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

They said 9.8 percent of hospital admissions for substance abuse in 2008 involved painkillers, up from 2.2 percent in 1998. The percentage of people admitted to treatment for alcohol dropped by 5 percent and for cocaine dropped by 16 percent over the same period.

"The spikes in prescription drug abuse rates captured by this study are dramatic, pervasive, and deeply disturbing," said Gil Kerlikowske,

director of the White House Office of National Drug Control Policy.

The admissions for treat-

"Those are our employed people, making big decisions about life..."

ment for abuse of prescription drugs such as hydrocodone, oxycodone, and morphine cut across differences in education, employment, race, and geography, according to the analysis.

Admission rates also increased across all

age groups, though the largest uptick was among people aged 18 to 24. For this age group, 13.7 percent were admitted because of prescription drug abuse in 2008, compared with 1.5 percent in 1998.

"This really has become a true public health problem," said SAMHSA's Peter Delany, who oversaw production of the report. "Those

are our employed people, making big decisions about life -- Am I going to get married? What am I going to do for a living? What's my next job?"

Fifty-six percent of the patients got their drugs for free from a friend or relative, and another 9 percent purchased them from someone they knew.

"Some of the reason is simply the increased availability," said Thomas McLellan, deputy director of the Office of National Drug Control Policy. He said painkiller prescriptions increased between 700 to 1,000 percent over the 10 years.

Abuse of prescription pain medication was the second most common type of illicit drug use in the United States in 2008, according to SAMHSA. More than 6 million Americans admitted to abusing prescription drugs in the month before they were surveyed, behind 15.2 million who said they used marijuana.

"A lot of young people, especially, don't see these as dangerous because they're medications," said Delany. "It's not safer. It's just a different type of drug." source:

Reuters News Service For additional tips, see the "client area" at www.AmericanDrugTesting.net or call 843-747-4111.



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