

Patricia Miller
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Ada, Michigan 49301

October 15, 2011

James Fahner, President, Board of Education
Forest Hills Public Schools
6590 Cascade Road SE
Grand Rapids, Michigan 49546

Dear Mr. Fahner,

I am a Registered Nurse employed with Spectrum Health System, and I am also a parent of children within the Forest Hills Public School District. I am writing this letter with concern for the safety of our adolescents in our community. As you are likely aware, prescription drug abuse among teens is a rising trend both locally and nationally. According to the Michigan Department of Community Health, Michigan ranks among the top five states in prescription misuse among youth in the nation, and is one of 15 states where prescription drug overdose is the second leading cause of unintentional death, just behind automobile crashes. Furthermore, according to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, nationwide, twenty-one percent of high school students have taken a prescription drug without a doctor's prescription at least once in their lifetime. Prescription drugs are the second most commonly abused category of drugs after marijuana. Sadly, many teens do not view prescription drugs as being dangerous because they are prescribed by physicians, and they are most often obtaining them from family members and/or friends.

A district wide prescription drug abuse prevention campaign will help to educate our adolescents on the risks of prescription drug abuse and will increase awareness of this rising problem among all in the Forest Hills community. Raising awareness of this growing epidemic will help to decrease the likelihood of our teens engaging in this risky behavior. The National Drug Control Strategy includes actions to reduce prescription drug abuse that can be implemented at the local level. Education is the first, most crucial step and should be directed at the students in the middle schools and high schools, as well as, in an age-appropriate way, to the elementary students. Peer support groups and confidential services to provide help to those students who may be struggling with drug problems is another area that should be addressed. Finally, one of the most important aspects of a drug abuse prevention campaign is the involvement of the parents in the preventions efforts. The costs and efforts involved in the development of a prescription drug abuse prevention campaign will be far outweighed by the benefits in building a safe, strong community for our children to grow to their full potential.

It is my hope that I can gain the support and assistance of the Board of Education to develop a district wide prescription drug abuse prevention campaign. The children and teens in our community deserve a drug-free future. Thank you for time and efforts in helping me to address this very serious issue.

Sincerely,

Patricia Miller