



# **BERRIEN COUNTY HEALTH DEPARTMENT**

**better health. stronger communities.**

**For Immediate Release**

## **Berrien County Health Department Raising Awareness to Prescription Drug Abuse, Resources for Prevention**

**Benton Harbor, Michigan, Oct. 31, 2023** – This fall, the Berrien County Health Department Public Health Prevention and Promotion team and the Voice. Change. Hope. Alliance are raising awareness about prescription drug abuse the local resources available for prevention.

Prescription drug misuse or abuse is defined as using prescription medications in a way not intended by the prescribing physician. This could include someone other than the prescribed patient using a medication or taking a medication differently than prescribed, such as injecting a medication that is meant to be taken as a pill.

According to the 2021 Youth Behavioral Risk Survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 12% of Michigan high schoolers have reported misusing a prescription pain killer at some point in their life. Across the U.S., 8.7 million people misused prescription pain medication in 2021.

Prescription drug misuse can have many negative effects, including addiction and death. BCHD is seeking to educate the community on how they can help prevent prescription drug misuse.

“Though helpful when taken as advised by a medical professional, prescription drugs can have devastating effects when misused,” said Lisa Peeples-Hurst, public health promotion and prevention supervisor. “Especially as the effects of the opioid epidemic continue to be felt throughout the U.S. and Berrien County, we want to educate community members about prescription drug abuse and what they can do to help prevent it.”

The 2021 National Survey for Drug Use and Health conducted by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration found that of individuals who misuse opioids, 88% exclusively misuse prescription drugs, without ever using substances like fentanyl or heroin.

Steps that you can take to help prevent prescription drug misuse include:

- Properly disposing of unused and expired prescription medication. A list of safe disposal sites throughout Berrien County can be found at <https://www.berriencounty.org/533/Medical-Waste>.
- Talking with loved ones about safe prescription drug use. To find talking tips for any age, visit [talksooner.org/talking-tips](http://talksooner.org/talking-tips).
- Modeling a healthy relationship with prescription medication by taking medication only as prescribed.

For more information about preventing prescription drug abuse and local resources, visit [berriencounty.org/1821/Rx-Drug-Abuse-Prevention](http://berriencounty.org/1821/Rx-Drug-Abuse-Prevention).

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