



**KEY FINDINGS OF 14<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL:  
2008 PARTNERSHIP/METLIFE FOUNDATION PARENTS ATTITUDE  
TRACKING STUDY**

***“Parents Report Increased Awareness of Risks of Teen Prescription  
Drug Abuse, But Preventative Action Lags”***

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The Partnership’s national survey shows a strong increase in parental awareness of the dangers of one of the most troubling and persistent trends in teen drug use – teen abuse of prescription medications.

**PATS 2008 – Key Findings:**

The study highlights remarkable year-over-year progress in increasing parents’ perception of the risks posed by teen abuse of prescription (Rx) medications.

- *Teen Rx abuse has become an entrenched behavior that nearly 20 percent of teens admit to engaging in during their lifetime.*
- *The number of parents who mistakenly believe that abusing prescription medicines is “much safer” than using illicit street drugs dropped by nearly half—from 19 percent in 2007 to just ten percent in 2008.*

The same level of progress was reported regarding beliefs about the addictive potential of some prescription medicines when misused.

- *In 2007, 24 percent of parents believed that intentional abuse of prescription medicines to get high would not be addictive. In 2008, that number decreased significantly to 11 percent.*

Heightened awareness has yet to translate into increased parental action to prevent the behavior, however.

**KEY FINDINGS:**

Partnership/MetLife Foundation Parents Attitude Tracking Study 2008

- *There is a small, yet statistically insignificant, percentage gain in the number of parents who say they have discussed the dangers of Rx abuse with their teens, from 68 percent in 2007 to 72 percent in 2008.*
- *Parent-teen discussions about the risks of abusing over-the-counter cough medicine have increased nearly 18 percent, with 65 percent of parents reporting these discussions, versus 55 percent in 2007.*

The primary – and increasingly influential – cue for parent-teen discussions about drug and alcohol issues is the media, particularly television.

- *In 2008, 70 percent of parents surveyed reported that something portrayed in the media prompted a conversation with their child about drugs or alcohol; and*
- *64 percent specified that they were motivated to start a discussion by seeing something drug-related on television. This represents a significant increase from 2007, when 63 percent and 57 percent of parents, respectively, reported the media in general or television specifically as a cue to talk to teens about substance abuse.*

More parents are prompted to address teen drug or alcohol use before special events, like graduation, and at key transition times when teens are most vulnerable, including starting a new grade or moving into middle or high school.

- *Significantly more parents in 2008 (27 percent) versus 2007 (20 percent) talked to their child or teen as they were preparing to enter a new grade in school; and*
- *Nearly 30 percent of parents in 2008 used special occasions including prom and graduation as an opportunity to have the conversation, up from just 18 percent in 2007.*

The study reveals a jump in the number of parents who are aware of their ability to influence their teens' decision to use drugs or alcohol.

- *The percentage of parents who agreed with the statement "there is very little parents can do to prevent their kids from trying drugs (other than alcohol)" dropped nearly 40 percent since 2007 to just 21 percent in 2008.*
- *More parents believe that they can help prevent alcohol use as well, with just 23 percent agreeing that there is little parents can do to prevent drinking, down from 34 percent in 2007.*

As parents gain confidence in their prevention abilities, they are less likely to view educating kids about the risks of drug use as the responsibility of their child's school.

#### KEY FINDINGS:

Partnership/MetLife Foundation Parents Attitude Tracking Study 2008

- *Fewer than 1 in 3 parents (27 percent) in 2008 agreed that schools should be primarily responsible for drug education, down from nearly 40 percent the previous year.*

Within the home, however, there are dramatic differences in attitudes between mothers and fathers.

- *Fathers were nearly three times as likely to believe that drug education should take place in school (34 percent of fathers versus 10 percent of mothers).*
- *Just 10 percent of mothers report having difficulty enforcing rules about alcohol, cigarette or drug use versus 18 percent of fathers.*
- *Fathers also placed greater value on being their child's friend (59 percent of fathers, 51 percent of mothers) although the majority of parents thought friendship with their child was important.*

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Partnership/MetLife Foundation Parents Attitude Tracking Study 2008